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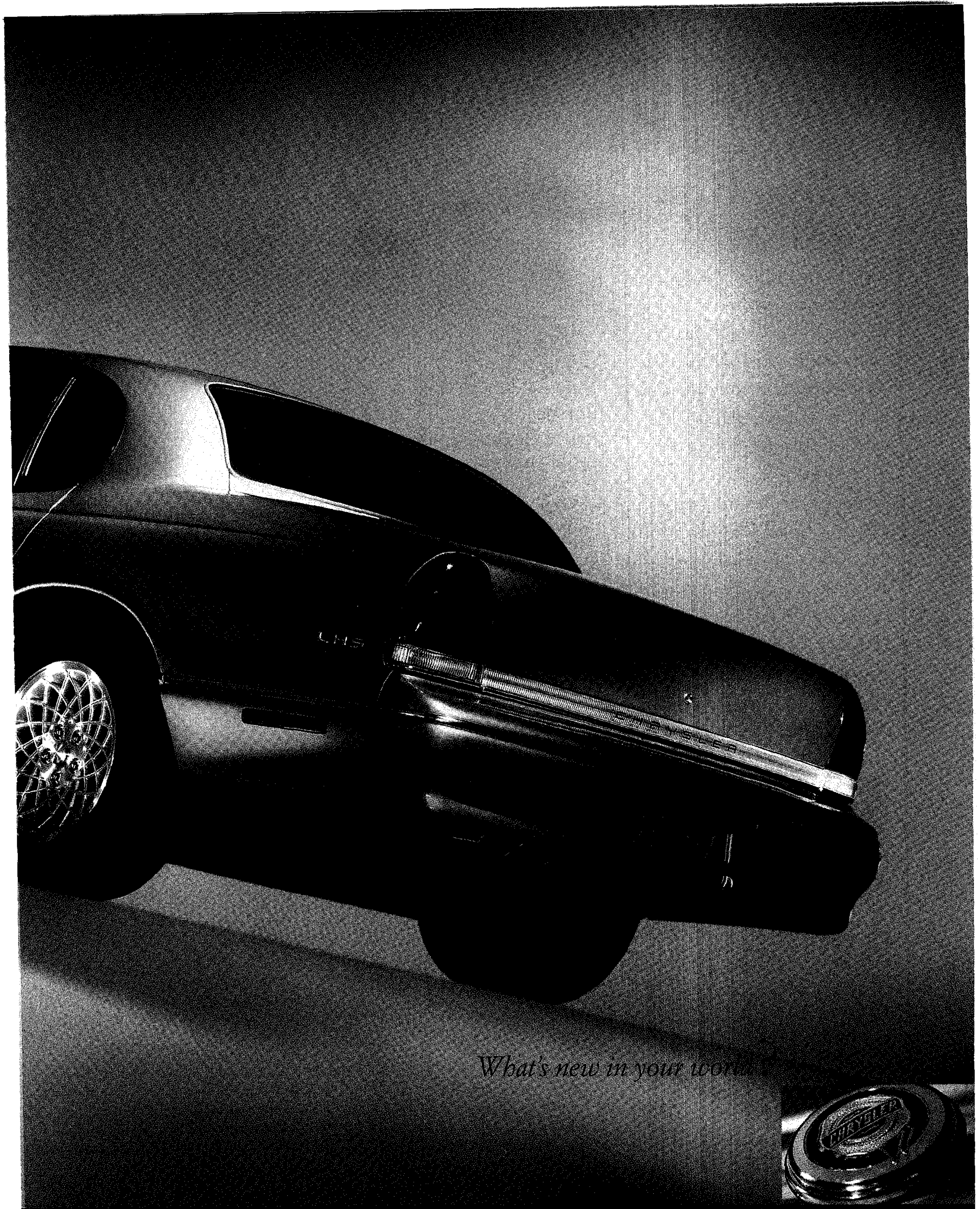
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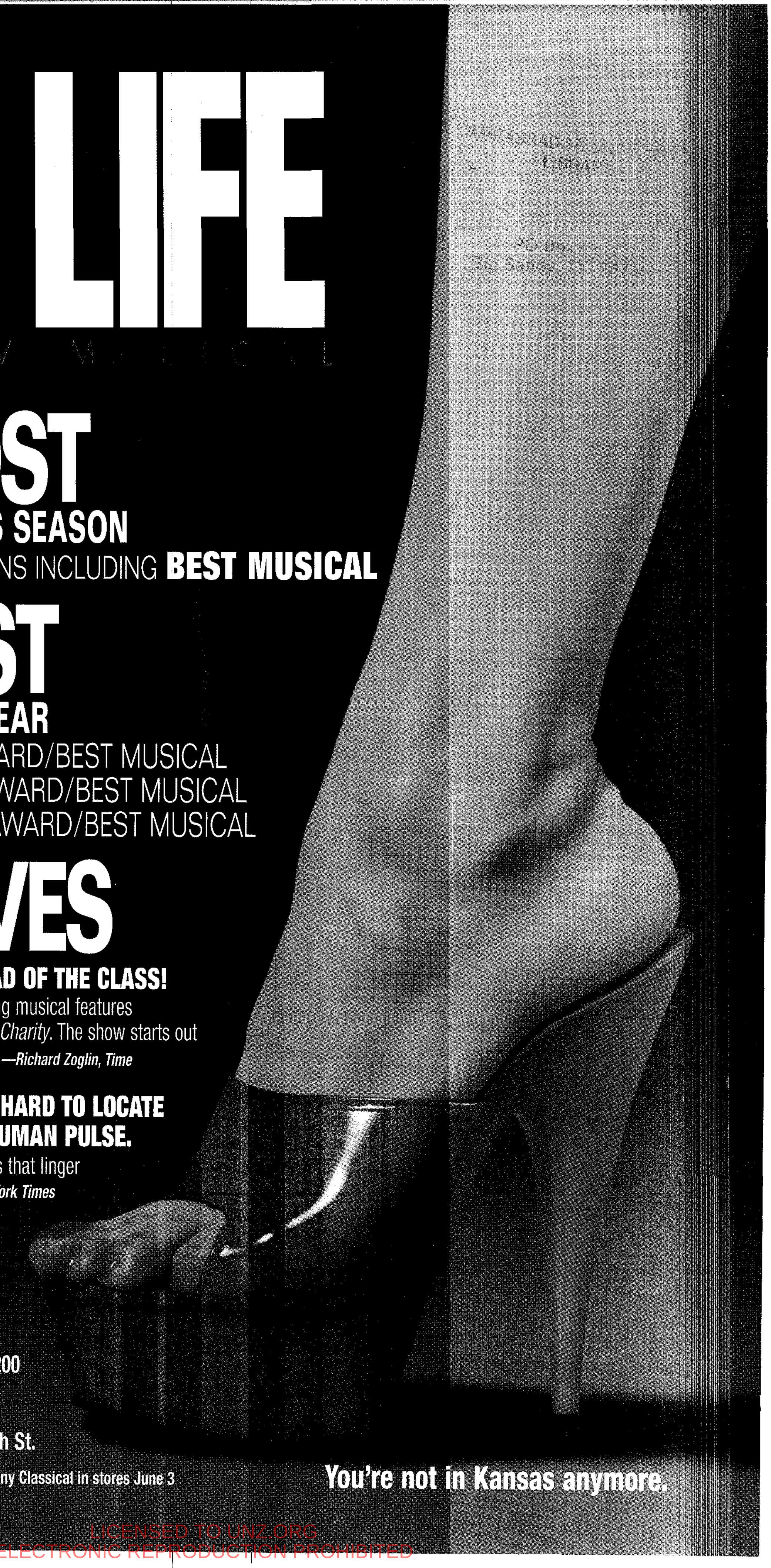

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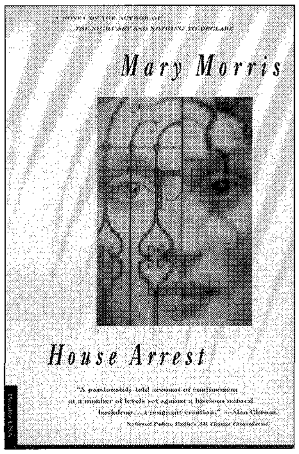

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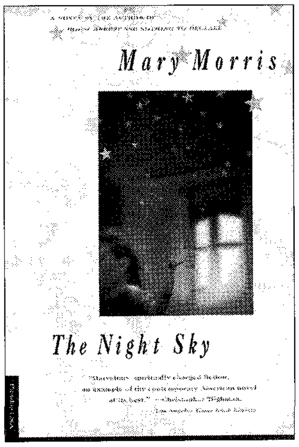

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COMMENT

SINS LIKE FLINN'S

What was the bomber pilot's real offense?

LAST week, the Air Force persuaded First Lieutenant Kelly Flinn, an unmarried twenty-six-year-old B-52 pilot, to accept a general discharge, thus sparing itself the embarrassment of subjecting her to trial by court martial for adultery, disobeying an order, and lying to official investigators. The second and third charges were essentially functions of the first, since Lieutenant Flinn, by her own remorseful admission, at first attempted to hide her tracks when she was asked by her superiors about her affair with a married civilian—a liaison that was a violation of military regulations. The facts of the case were never at issue. The sole mystery was, and remains, the motivation of the armed forces in doggedly pursuing one of its star female officers for an everyday human failing, thereby making an outsize addition to a dismal series of embarrassments—Operation Tailhook, The Citadel, the recent rape and sexual-harassment trials of high-ranking noncommissioned officers, and so forth—that have accompanied the generally admirable process of integrating the military. There is nothing funny about the contretemps for Lieutenant Flinn; she is no longer in danger of doing time in a military prison, but her pioneering military career has been ruined, and her less than honorable discharge is a stigma. The rest of us, though, can be forgiven for having found entertainment in this unexpected Pentagon production of "The Scarlet Letter" and in the enduring ridiculousness of our antiquated and unenforceable sex laws.

It fell to Dr. Sheila E. Widnall, the Secretary of the Air Force (and the first female service Secretary ever), to find a reasonable alternative to the spectacle of a trial. In this effort she was up against the mortifying dumbness of the brass, which seemed to have got itself into the preposterous bind of trying to stamp out sex. It was not always thus; indeed, during periods when the Pentagon has serious business to attend to, such as fighting a war, it is never thus. During the Second World War, a great many Army wives (a fresh title for most of them) were holding down demanding and engrossing new jobs and meeting new men, while their husbands, often continents away, were coming to see that, along with death and griping and boredom, sex—the practice of it or the absence of it—was a central preoccupation of the military routine. (Here, as always, officers had the best of it: the higher the rank, by ancient military law, the prettier the girl. G.I.s, for the most part, were left sucking the mop.) If the

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Army and the Navy had busied themselves back then with prosecuting the adulterers in their ranks, the Axis powers would have waltzed to victory.

Only in peacetime, one must conclude, does the military have the leisure to single out and (very selectively) prosecute a few enlisted or commissioned adulterers—in the interests of order, or good discipline, or something. Sixty-seven per cent of all enlisted Air Force personnel are now married—a statistic suggesting that this campaign is being waged on behalf of domestic concord, and that our battle fleets and air armadas now go forth in defense not only of national security but also of family values. Has anyone run this past the Armed Services Committee?

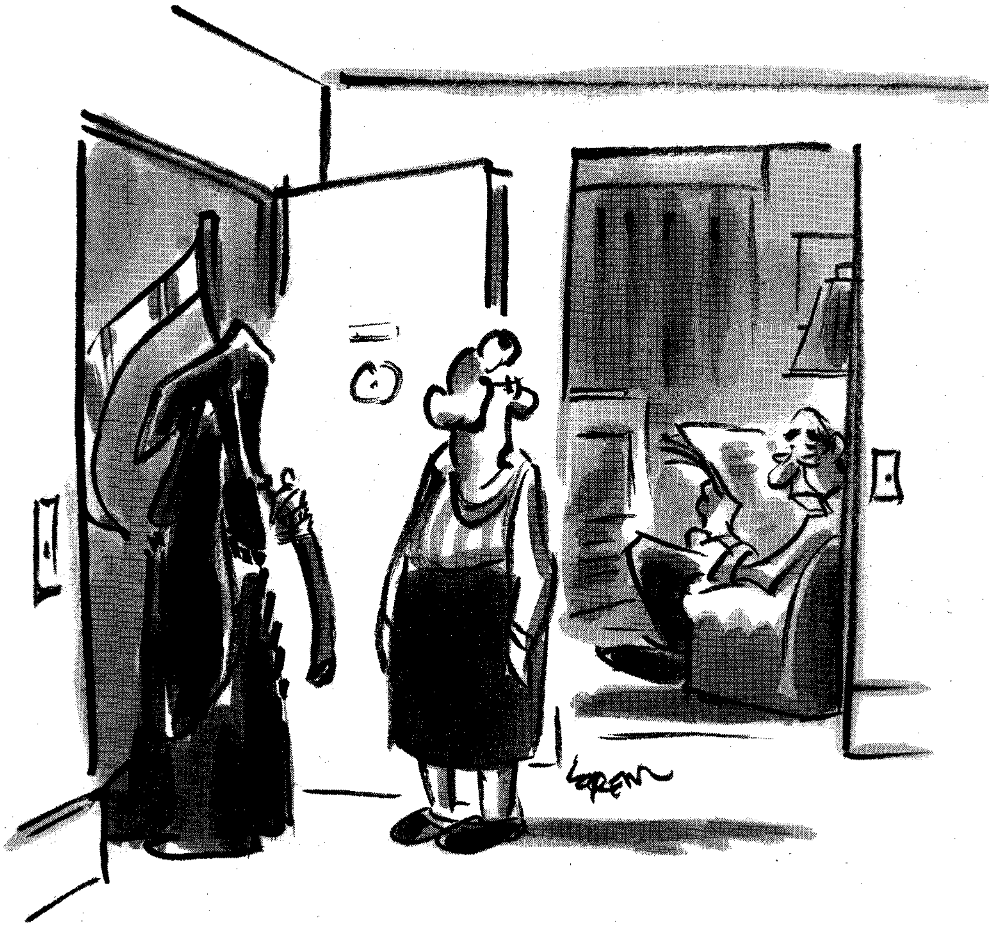
The current rule for members of the armed forces, reporters on the Flinn story were told, is, Go ahead and fall in love, but watch out if one of you happens to be married. The active principle is exactly the same as that for the Stealth Bomber: Don't get noticed. This still doesn't explain what Lieutenant Flinn's irregular love life had to do with her capabilities as a pilot. Several Air Force representatives or apologists manfully attempted to answer this question on TV news shows by claiming that anyone who breaks the rules on the ground may be tempted to disobey combat orders while aloft—a theory that might have come growling out around the cigar of General Jack D. Ripper, in "Dr. Strangelove."

Another defense that was put forward on the talk shows argued that anyone who enters the services does so with eyes open, and cannot expect exemption from the consequences of violating the rules. In states like Massachusetts, Oklahoma, and Michigan, where adultery is a felony, offending couples might hear a similar lecture from a judge, except that such cases are almost never prosecuted, because common sense has not been eclipsed there by any articles of enlistment. In Maryland, we have lately been reminded, adultery is punishable by a ten-dollar fine. In Minnesota, it's a misdemeanor, but only if you're the wife. And so it goes—a pattern of worn-out local foolishness as various as and rather less significant than the prevailing dog-litter ordinances, except in the military. To have made love to somebody not your spouse can be wrenching and painful, wherever you live and whatever your profession, and, of course, it can be the source of lasting alterations in your life. It can also cause you to end up in court, but when that happens it is the lawyers that are to be feared, not the law.

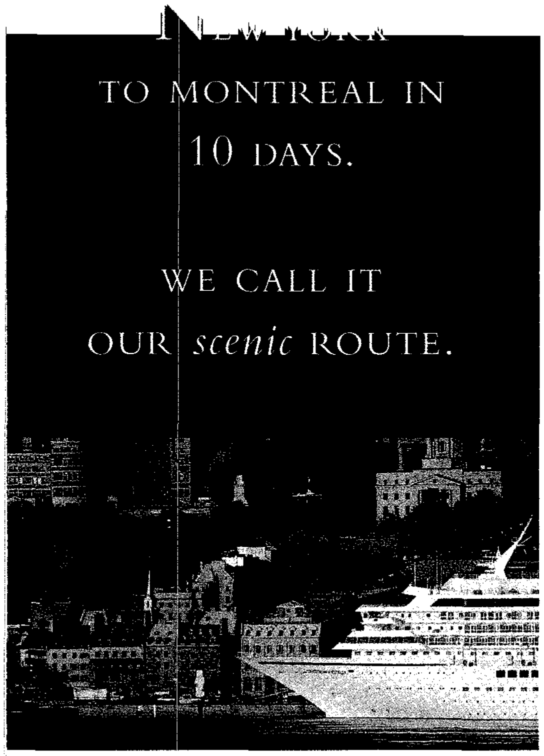
L'affaire Flinn remains so mystifying—so contrary to common sense in its obdurate, step-by-step path toward absurdity and injustice—that we must allow some deeper speculations to surface. Lieutenant Flinn, who is trim and blond and strikingly feminine in appearance, is the first woman ever to pilot the B-52—a huge aircraft (more than sixty yards from wingtip to wingtip), capable of carrying a nuclear payload equal in destructive power to all the bombs dropped by all sides in all the wars of this century. For more than thirty-five years, the big plane has been the mainstay of our airborne nuclear deterrence, the pride of the legendary Strategic Air Command, and the preëminent (and gleamingly phallic) symbol of male power on the wing. Flying the B-52, whose purpose is the destruction of entire cities from a godlike height, is macho Valhalla, and the arrival of a fully trained and qualified woman on the flight deck must have been cause for consternation somewhere in the collective unconscious of the old-line flyboys who make policy decisions in the Air Force. To put this another way, one must wonder whether Lieutenant Flinn would have been brought low in this fashion if her military specialty had been nutritionist, communications officer, systems analyst, or even transport pilot. No particular board or general actually decided to sock it to this particular B-52 pilot, it seems; somehow, it just happened.

In fairness, perhaps we should drop down one more inward, or idward, line here, this time into our own deeper pools, and ask how it is that this dopey contemporary parable became the cause of such widespread indignation and so much laughter. Why, because of love! Which of us, reading about Lieutenant Flinn's plight, did not want to leap to her side, not merely against the harrumphing, finger-wagging Colonel Grundys but also against the whiny, turncoat meanness of her bad-choice ex-lover? Which of us—perhaps only yearning to be again as young and quick and capable as she—did not recall, just for a moment, the twanging thrill of an impossible romance, and then getting into all kinds of trouble with the old folks?

—ROGER ANGELL



"It's the closure fairy."



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THE MAIL

CONTINENTAL DRIFT

In his article "The Unthinkable" (Special Europe Issue, April 28th & May 5th) Philip Gourevitch modified one of my statements by having me say, "What do I have to do to not be racist? Marry a black woman? With AIDS, if possible?" However, as my recording of our interview shows, I said marry "a black person" ("*un noir*"), and not "a black woman" ("*une noire*"). My expression, on this side of the Atlantic, has an obvious ironic meaning that Mr. Gourevitch did not pick up. I am sure your readers will catch all of its humor.

JEAN-MARIE LE PEN
Saint-Cloud, France

Mr. Le Pen is obviously a bigot. Why, then, does he seem to resonate with such a large percentage of French voters? I, for one, do not believe that it is nostalgia for Vichy. The impetus for their response to him (and for the growing nativism in the United States) lies in the immigration of poor people (many of whom become public charges) to countries that have an elaborate welfare system. Productively employed taxpayers resent the influx of people they perceive as freeloaders. It's one thing to take care of homegrown unemployables, but why go out looking for more?

RICHARD H. HOWARTH
Reston, Va.

Clive James, in his Comment "Europe: An Introduction," describes America as "largely a European creation," and Europe as "the most productive piece of geography in the planet's history." But the notion that creation comes about from an idea is erroneous—and largely European. The creation myths of other cultures describe a creator who fashioned the world through labor, whether in a cosmic uterus or by cosmic hands. "America" as an idea may have come from European minds, but the hands that built it were largely of another race and often worked at the point of a gun: the hands of Native Americans, cultivating the crops without which the first Europeans on this continent would have starved; the hands of Africans, cultivating the rich fields of the South, which gave this young country its first taste of power; the hands of Chinese railroad workers, uniting East and West.

JUDITH MAHONEY PASTERNAK
New York City

Jane Kramer, in "Manna from Hell," writes as if Switzerland had spent centuries as a happy neutral surrounded by victim countries. But Switzerland was actually surrounded by an eagerly bellicose Europe. Its neighbors—France, Austria, Italy, and, surely not least, Germany—had sent their soldiers all over the place. Switzerland did not share in all this virility, and remained a very poor country until, by dint of staying out of those brave European battles, it ended up a very rich country—one, moreover, that takes extremely good care of its own citizens (and, indeed, only of its own citizens).

HANS KONING
Fairfield, Conn.

I was most appreciative of Adam Gopnik's "Is There a Crisis in French Cooking?" But I would suggest that the crisis is intellectual, not culinary. Several years ago, I dined at Lucas Carton as the guest of Alain Senderens, a chef I have greatly admired ever since his Archestrate days. In response to Senderens's enthusiastic talk of the United States, I asked him about his favorite restaurants in New York. He cited only one establishment, saying that each time he comes here he loves to have a steak at Peter Luger's. As fine a restaurant as Peter Luger's is, I must say that I thought this response could be construed as a sophisticated version of the stereotypical French notion that American cuisine consists of hamburgers. The problem isn't that French chefs have lost their creative ardor but, rather, that the gastro-xenophobic French food critics are rarely willing to admit that there are other cuisines worthy of note.

ALLEN S. WEISS
Huntington, N.Y.

Letters should be as brief as possible, and sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number to "The Mail," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. They may be edited for length and clarity.

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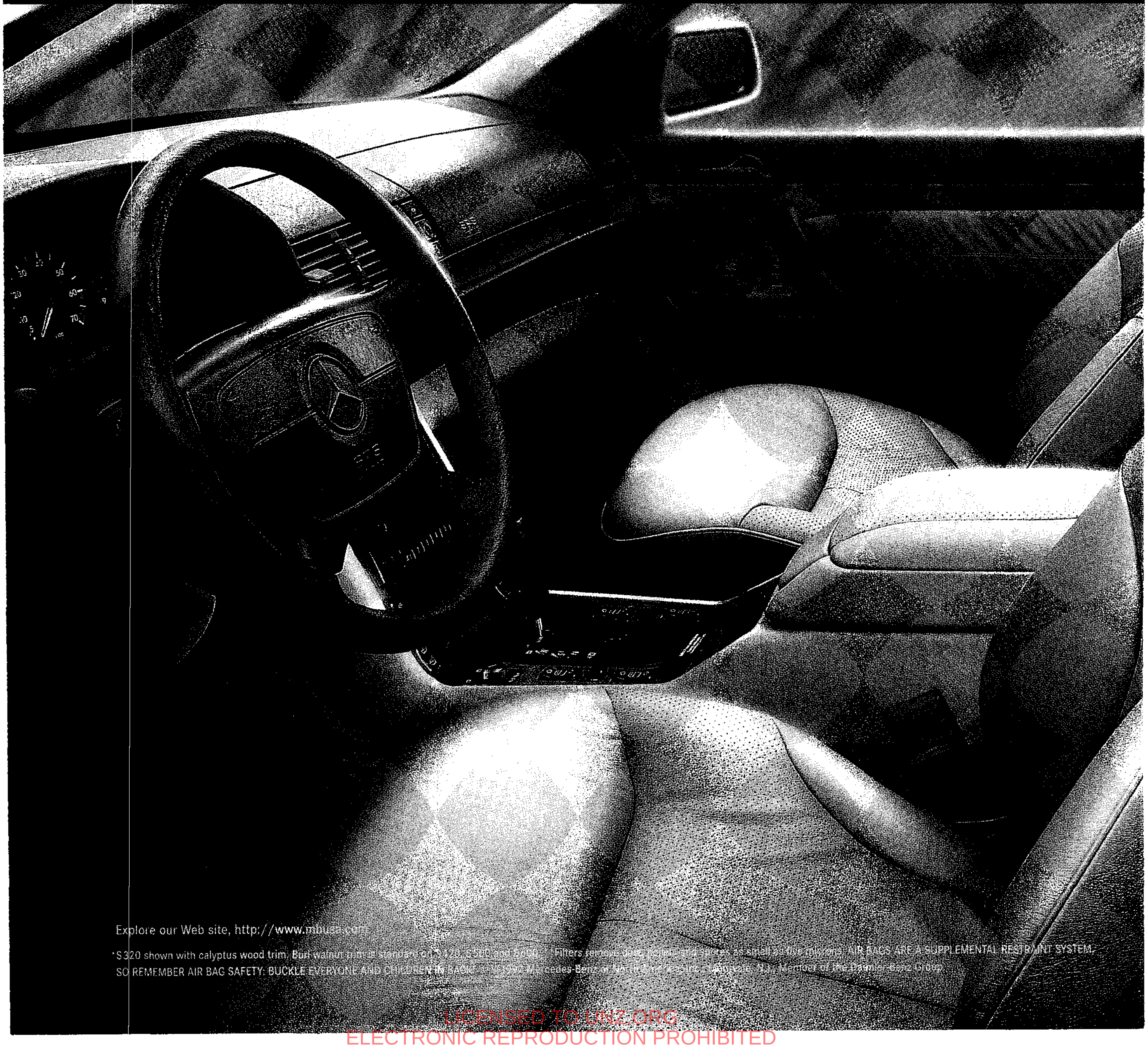

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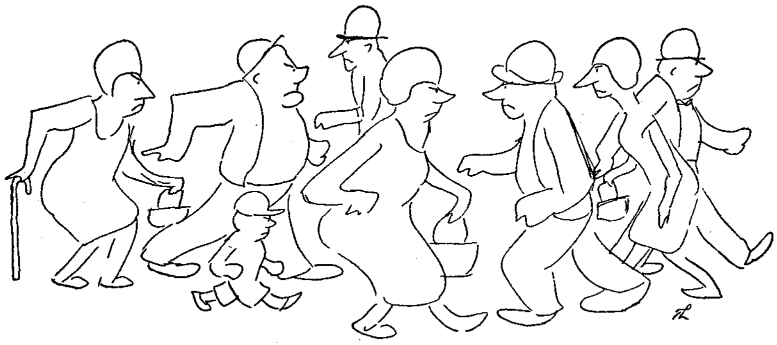

THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

As You Like It—The Acting Company swings into town to present Romanian-born director Liviu Ciulei's staging of Shakespeare's comedy. Ten performances only: May 28-June 4. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200.)

Baby Anger—From Peter Hedges, a new comedy, starring Kristen Johnston and John Pankow as a pair of reluctant parents. Michael Mayer is the director. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Clean—Edwin Sanchez's latest drama about love in a world of violence. In previews. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

A Drop in the Bucket—Two widows do Atlantic City, in a dark comedy by Edward Belling. Opens May 28 at 8. (Judith Anderson, 422 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Fairy Tales—A revue about gay life, by Eric Lane Barnes. Directed by Mark Cannistraro. In previews through June 2. Opens June 3 at 8. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523.)

The Medium—The second in a series of three plays being presented over three weeks by the Saratoga International Theatre Institute. It's an encore production of an expressionistic drama centered on the thought of Marshall McLuhan, in which he appears, crippled by a stroke, wielding a remote-control device. Directed by Anne Bogart. May 29-30 at 8 and May 31 at 2 and 8. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799.)

Notions in Motion—Jeremy Dobrish has retooled Pirandello's "Each in His Own Way" as a comedy about a Mafia love scandal. Presented by the Adobe Theatre Company. Previews May 28-29. Opens May 30 at 8. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 560-7387.)

Seeking the Genesis—A drama by Kia Corthron, about a single mother trying to raise two sons in an inner-city housing project. In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

OPENED RECENTLY

All My Sons—The Roundabout Theatre Company presents Arthur Miller's 1947 drama. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

An American Daughter—A doctor (Kate Nelligan) undergoing confirmation hearings for the post of Surgeon General gets run through the wringer by the media, in Wendy Wasserstein's latest, a moving, compelling drama that resonates well beyond the feminist arena. Daniel Sullivan is the director. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Annie—Can the powerhouse waif find another bonanza in this twentieth-anniversary revival of her Broadway musical? With eight-year-old Brittny Kissinger wearing the red fright wig, anything is possible: no one ever went broke underestimating the intelligence of the New York public. Directed by Martin Charnin. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Barrymore—Christopher Plummer's rich, un-miked voice hits every note of sarcasm and self-loathing in William Luce's rambunctious script as he perfectly captures the grief behind the old ham's gallant frivolity. Well directed by Gene Saks. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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Bermuda Avenue Triangle—A sexy gambler on the skids (Joseph Bologna) returns the zing to the lives of two elderly women, a Jew (Renée Taylor) and a Catholic (Nanette Fabray), whose sullen daughters have put them out to pasture in a Las Vegas retirement home. Audience members unfamiliar with the husband-and-wife playwright-actors Bologna and Taylor may think they've stumbled into the couple's monthly fan-club meeting at this silly farce, which traffics in the kind of cookie-cutter stereotypes that rate high on the matinée-crowd yuk-o-meter. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Boy x Man—The Negro Ensemble Company opens its thirtieth season with a drama written by Ed Bullins and directed by Clinton Turner Davis. (Samuel Beckett, 412 W. 42nd St. 594-2826.)

Candide—Spectacle substitutes for satire in this revival and revision of the 1956 Leonard Bernstein–Lillian Hellman–Richard Wilbur musical, directed by Hal Prince. The dishevelled book offers no emotional or thematic progression, and the metallic sound of the orchestra muddies the scintillating humor of Bernstein's score. Ultimately, the production drowns out all personality, with the exceptions of the expert Andrea Martin, who knows a laugh and how to get it, and Arte Johnson, a little comic who is large on charm. Also with Jim Dale, Jason Danieley, and Harolyn Blackwell. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/19/97.) (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

Capitol Steps—A political revue performed by a troupe of former Congressional staff members. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

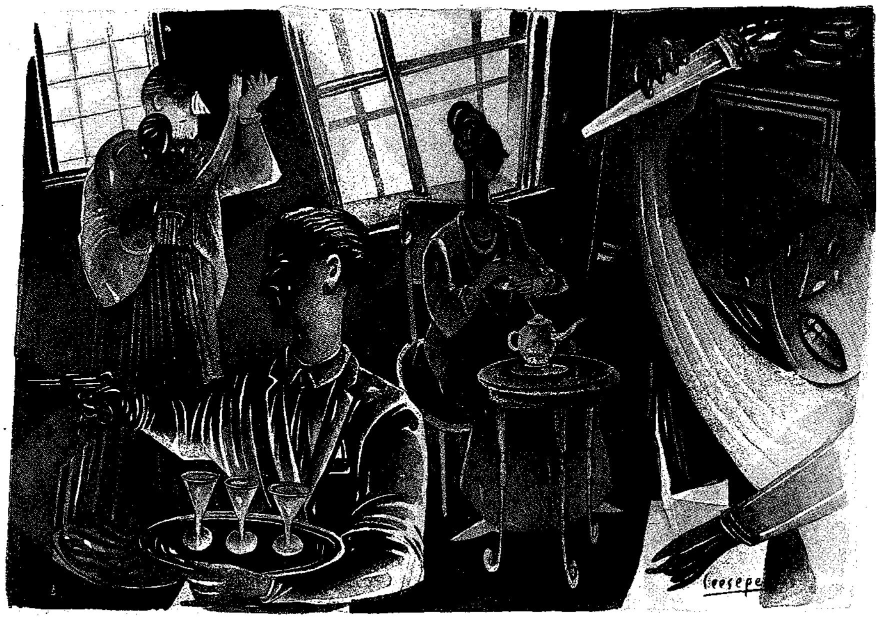
The Chairs—Eugene Ionesco's 1952 "tragic farce" does impress upon its viewers both the inadequacy of words and the desperate need to communicate that are at the core of many of his plays. And this production is buoyed by a terrific cast (Robert Hock, Marylouise Burk, and Christopher Graham) and directed at lightning speed by John Morrison. But their efforts are weighed down by the fact that the play is just too long; only the brilliance of the final joke allows you to leave the theatre feeling more engaged than oppressed. (Pearl, 80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802. Closes June 1.)

Chicago City Limits—The improv company presents a new revue, "@Chicago City Limits. comedy." (Chicago City Limits Theatre, First Ave. at 61st St. 888-5233.)

Collected Stories—A drama by Donald Margulies, about an aging writer (Maria Tucci) and her talented protégée (Debra Messing). (Reviewed in this issue.) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Curse of the Starving Class—Say what you will about Sam Shepard's rootless, aimless, broken-down families—but not until you see the Signature Theatre Company's keen production of his 1978 play. It's a rich experience, thanks in particular to Deborah Hedwall, as a mother who can no longer muster any motherliness, and Jude Ciccolella, as a mean, sad, but funny drunk of a father whose rants become soliloquies. A mostly fine supporting cast, a high-lonesome set, evocative lighting, and witty sound (a refrigerator so empty that it echoes) add the finishing touches. James Houghton directed. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200. Closes May 31.)

The Devils—Dostoyevsky's novel was the inspiration for Elizabeth Egloff's new play. (New



Elizabeth Egloff's "The Devils," at New York Theatre Workshop.

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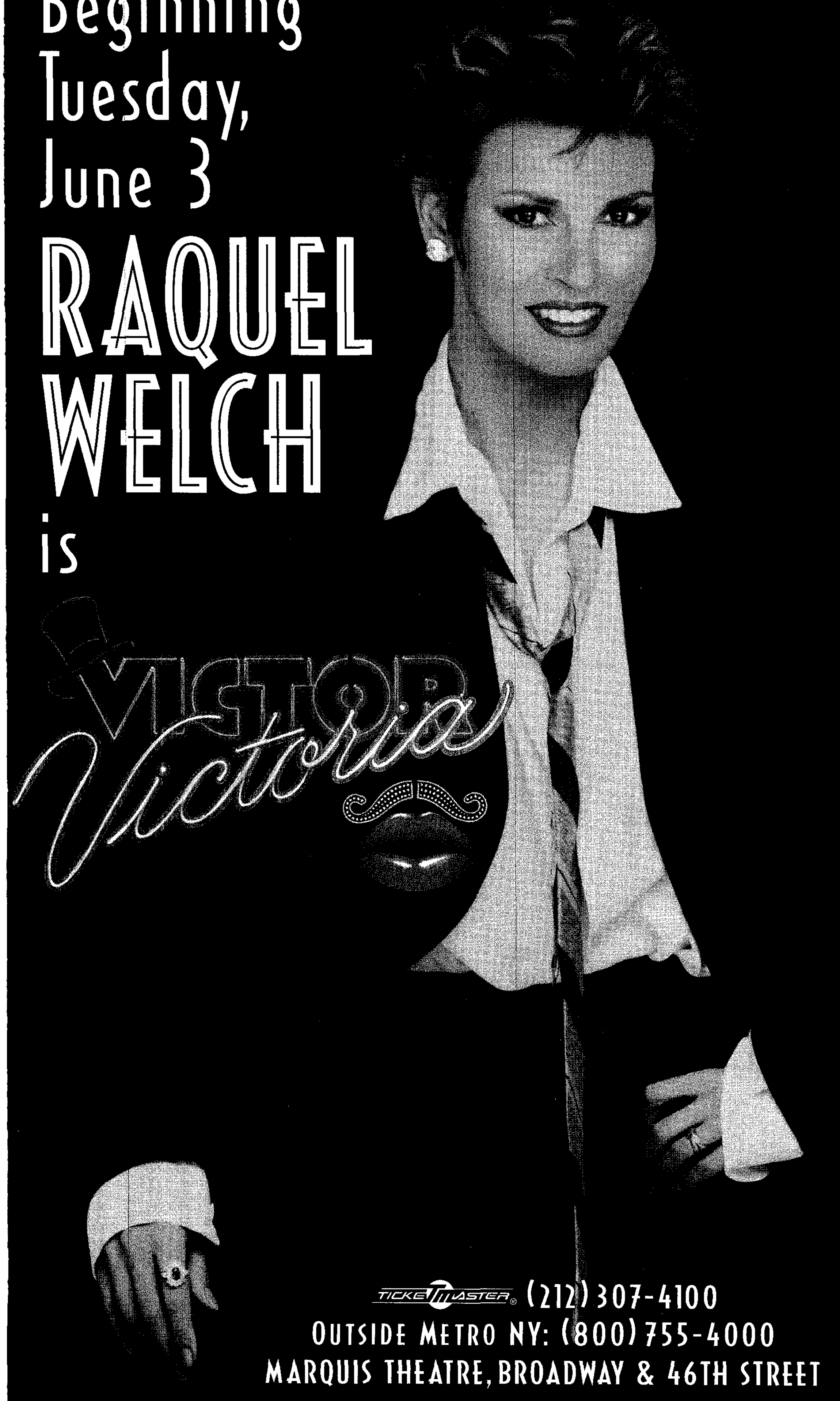

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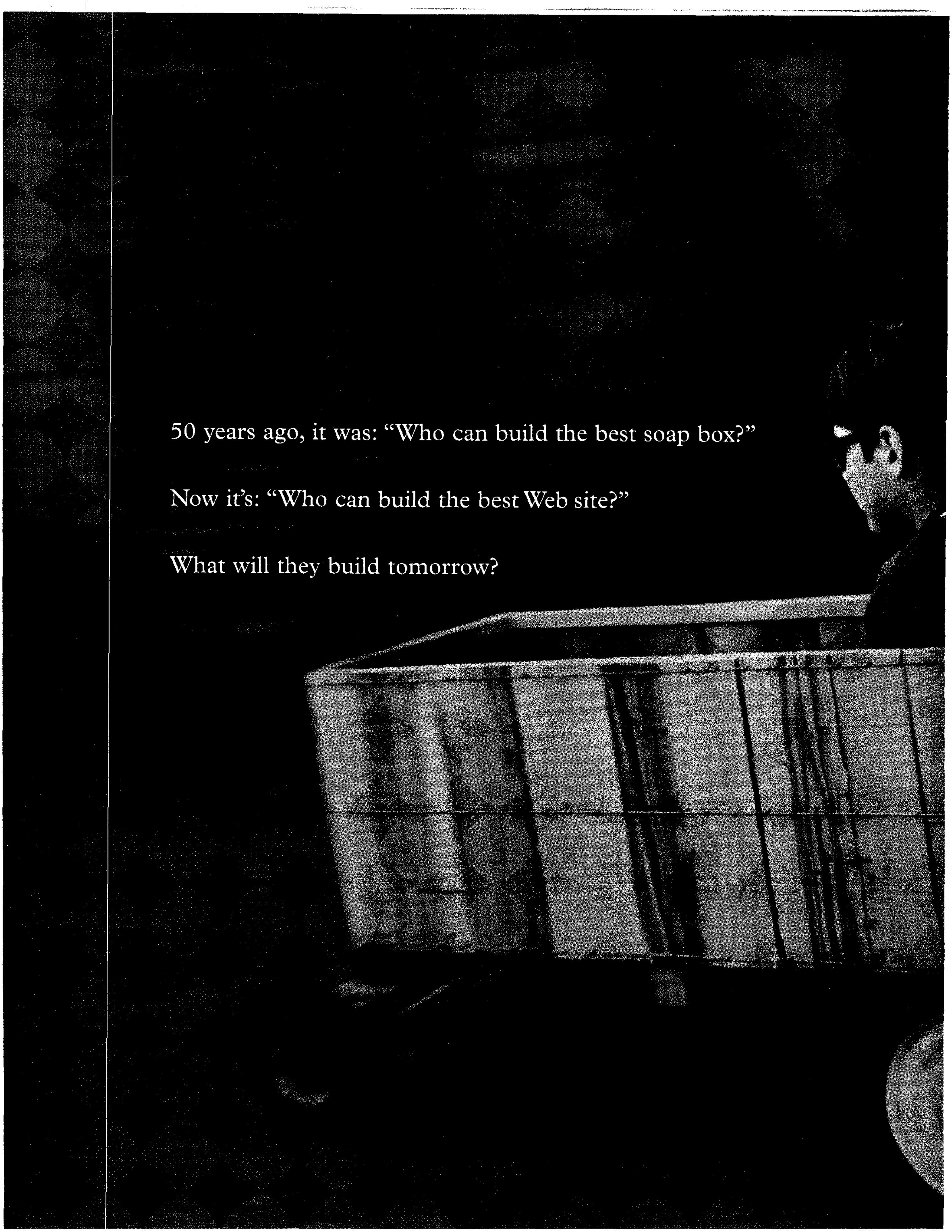
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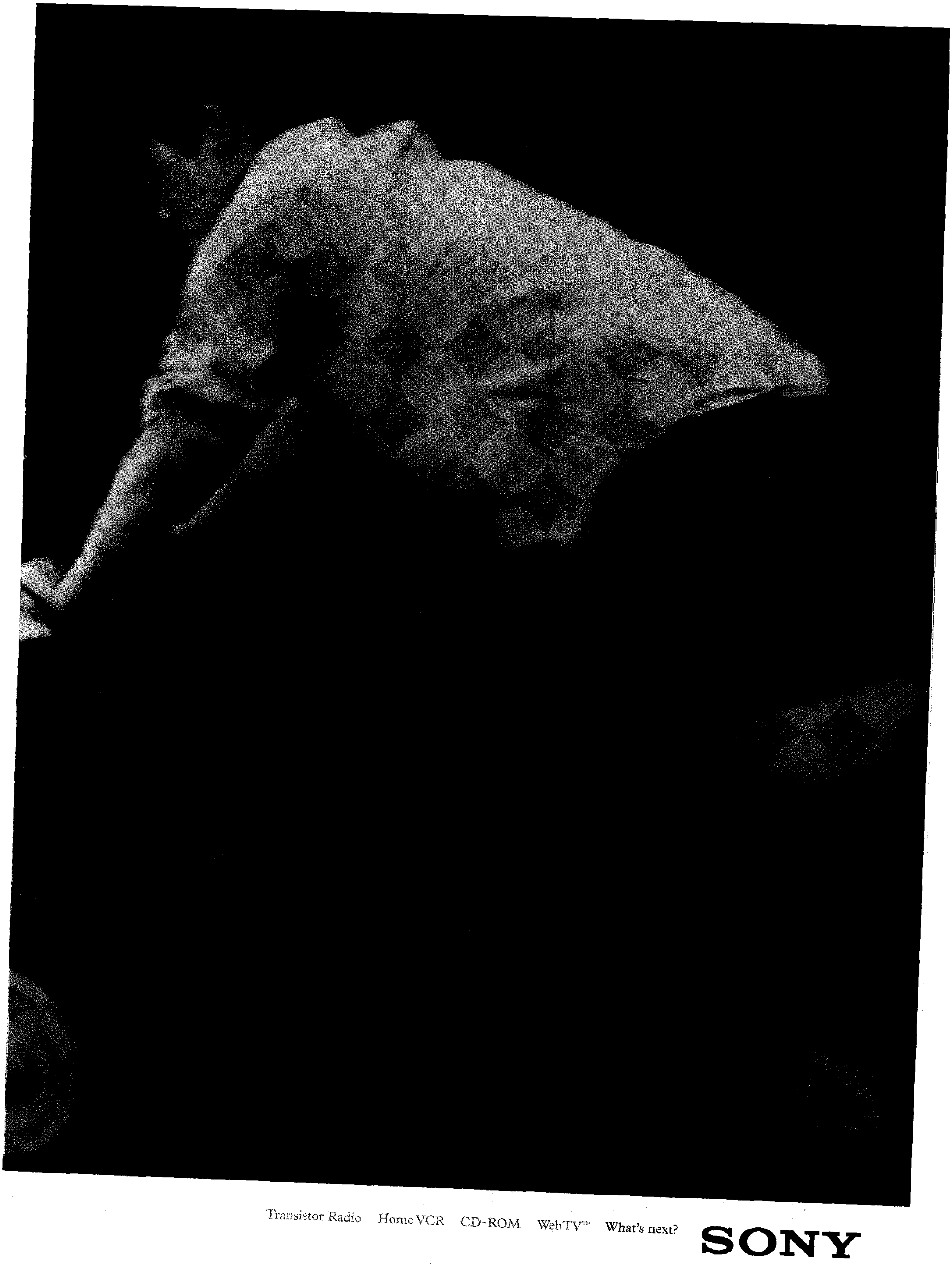
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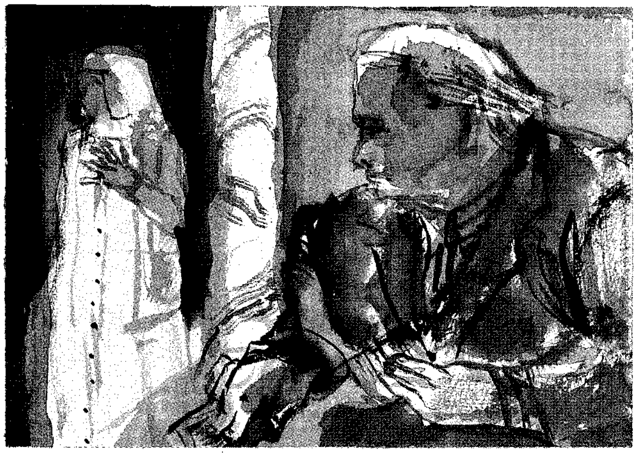
York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475. Closes June 8.)

A Doll's House—A thrilling version of Ibsen's play, imported from the West End. Anthony Page's scrupulous, sensitive direction catches all the music and irony in the collusion between Nora (masterfully played by Janet McTeer) and her husband, Torvald (the passionate Owen Teale). (4/14/97) (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Dream—A train wreck of a tribute to the great lyricist Johnny Mercer, in which only the singer Margaret Whiting and the singing jazz guitarist John Pizzarelli get out alive. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

East of Eadie—Betty Bourne, of Bloolips, stars in a new drag comedy by Ray Dobbins. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Closes June 1.)



Julie Harris and Charles Durning, in "The Gin Game."

Ensemble Studio Theatre—Series B of this year's six-week marathon of one-acts continues through June 1, with plays by Michael Weller, Julie McKee, Romulus Linney, and Michael Louis Wells. The marathon continues through June 15. (549 W. 52nd St. 247-3405.)

The Gin Game—Julie Harris and Charles Durning shine in the National Actors Theatre's funny, poignant revival of D. L. Coburn's 1977 play, about two elderly people who discover an antidote to their loneliness in a card game. Charles Nelson Reilly directed. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde—A new play written and directed by Moisés Kaufman. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

How I Learned to Drive—Paula Vogel's memory play, about a young woman (Mary-Louise Parker) who comes of age too quickly under the tutelage of her pedophile uncle (David Morse), is a clear-eyed marvel. (Century Theatre, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

Jekyll & Hyde—Enjoyable bombast, loosely based on the Robert Louis Stevenson novel, with music by Frank Wildhorn and lyrics and a book by Leslie Bricusse. While there is much here to laugh at, the show exerts an undeniable pull, aided by the solid direction of Robin Phillips and the lovely voices of Linda Eder and Christiane Noll, who more than do justice to Wildhorn's melodies. Robert Cuccioli has the lead. (5/12/97) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

King of Rats—David Greenspan heads up the cast of Russian-born playwright Marina Shron's drama, about a family's sudden deterioration. (46 Walker Street Theatre. 560-7387. Closes June 7.)

La Mama—May 29-June 1 at 7: "Woyzeck '97," a contemporary version of Büchner's tragedy, by the Todd Theatre Troupe. . . .¶ May 29-31 at 10: Peggy Shaw and Lois Weaver perform "Lust and Comfort," which they co-wrote, about a female cross-dresser and her butch servant. (74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)

The Last Night of Ballyhoo—In this romantic comedy of manners, set in Atlanta in 1939, Alfred Uhry stays true to a Southern sense of propriety: he takes on an unsavory topic (anti-Semitism among the Jewish upper crust) without dwelling on it long enough to offend anyone, and, like a practiced host, he shows you a good time without taxing you. Ron Lagomarsino directed. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100.)

The Life—This new musical about the oldest profession in Times Square before it became known as the new Times Square (surely you remember all those singing hookers you used to pass on your way to the theatre) and the men who profit from its practitioners is a cynical, poisonous concoction, featuring phony funk, fake blues, overcooked pop, and a cartoonish, insulting book—all from a group of theatrical veterans who should have known better. The game cast includes some good singers, notably Lillias White and Pamela Isaacs. (5/12/97) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

The Little Foxes—In Lillian Hellman's cunning dissection of greed and sexual politics, set in the New South in 1900, the Machiavellian Regina Hubbard shakes down her brothers, who are on the brink of a new business venture, for a larger piece of the family pie. Stockard Channing's Regina is a steely, intelligent woman, ravished both by money and by the momentum of the new industrial age. Regina seizes her life, as Hellman did, by playing according to the men's rules. While the rest of the casting in Jack O'Brien's production is uneven, the lineaments of the exciting chicanery and the fierce feminism underneath it come through. (5/19/97) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200. Closes June 15.)

London Assurance—As a vain, preening dandy, Brian Bedford serves up so much ham in this production of Dion L. Boucicault's 1841 comedy that you're ready to push the plate away and leave the table long before the meal has ended. The play, a mistaken-identity farce set in posh Belgravia and at a country estate, has been ballyhooed as foreshadowing Wilde; it may be pre-Wilde, but it's also drastically sub-Wilde—at least twice as annoying as it is witty. The cast, under the direction of Joe Dowling, also includes Christopher Evan Welch (brilliant in "Scapin," not so hot here, as a smooth-talking freeloader), Rainn Wilson, David Schramm, Kathryn Meisle, Ken Jennings, and Helen Carey, who gamely plays a loud, fit, early-rising, horsey type. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

Mabou Mines—At 7: "Hajj," a performance poem featuring Ruth Maleczech. Continues through June 1. . . . ¶ At 10: "A Prelude to Death in Venice," a new, puppetless version of Lee Breuer's 1980 play about a man trying to make a movie deal. Continues through May 31. (Toro Nada, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 473-1991.)

Men on the Verge of a His-Panic Breakdown—Felix A. Pire, who has such fine stage presence that he makes even the costume and set changes interesting, brings a wacky improvisational spirit to his portrayal of six gay Latino immigrants, in a one-man show penned by Guillermo Reyes. Some of the characters (such as a Colombian "West Village kept boy over thirty" who has just been kicked out by his sugar daddy) seem to be hanging onto their American existence by a thread, but, make no mistake, *gringito*, these are tough, tenacious men: as Federico, a lovable recent arrival from Central America, says, "I'm here to stay. Get used to it." Joseph Megel directed. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 265-1086.)

Mere Mortals and Others—David Ives, who created the wonderful "All in the Timing," has lately changed his tune to "All in the Recycling": only two of the six short plays here are new. They are, however, Ives at his clever best. "Time Flies" is about the short life of two mayflies—only one day to grow up and get it on before going to the great beyond—and the two actors who play them, Anne O'Sullivan and Arnie Burton, are perfectly buggy. "Dr. Fritz; or, The Forces of Light" is a piece of insanity set somewhere south of the border, and Nancy Opel, woman of a hundred lunatic accents (she was simply terrific in "All in the Timing"), gives an inspired performance as a *loca* local and as a mad German doctor. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

Once Upon a Mattress—That modern madcap Sarah Jessica Parker shines as the princess in Gerald Gutierrez's revival of Mary Rodgers's silly, marshmallowy 1959 musical. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200. Closes May 31.)

Steel Pier—John Kander and Fred Ebb's new musical takes place at a dance marathon in Atlantic City in 1933: it's a slick Depression fantasy with imagery and ideas that have long been overused in movies and television. Stale, hand-me-down authenticity also infects Susan Stroman's choreography and the plot, which revolves around a daredevil pilot (Daniel McDonald) and a sweet, innocent girl (Karen Ziemba) who is treated badly by her gold-digging husband (Gregory Harrison). (5/12/97) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

Stonewall Jackson's House—Jonathan Reynolds's comedy hits all its targets—from multiculturalism to the misuses of history—with deadly aim, and the versatile cast is hilarious. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

Tap Dogs—Australia's work-booted tap troupe. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

Titanic—Though this musical about history's most tragic maiden voyage contains no small number of historical and theatrical misjudgments (and technical problems), it nevertheless manages to take you very close to the heart of the matter—the enormity of the disaster and its heartbreaking human details—and it qualifies as a genuine addition to American musical theatre. Miraculously, the show steers clear of both the Scylla of camp and the Charybdis of bad taste, and the result is an evening that's both sombre and joyful, grave and entertaining. Richard Jones directed. (5/12/97) (Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

To Catch the Lightning—A Puerto Rican Traveling Ensemble staging of a new play by Carmen Rivera, about a man losing touch with reality. Performances are in English Wednesdays through Fridays and in Spanish Saturdays and Sundays. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 345-1293.)

The Wizard of Oz—A would-be extravaganza based on the 1939 film classic which feels stuck on fast forward: as sixteen scenes whiz by in ninety minutes, most of the movie's magic gets left by the side of the Yellow Brick Road. Still, the cast is pleasant, especially Michael Gruber, who plays the Tin Man, and Judith McCauley, who plays Glinda, the Good Witch. As the Wicked Witch of the West, Roseanne laughs fiendishly and spends a lot of time in the air on a broom. (Madison Square Garden. 307-4111. Closes June 8.)

The Young Man from Atlanta—Horton Foote's Pulitzer Prize-winning drama, set in Houston in 1950, with powerful performances by Rip Torn and Shirley Knight, as a couple whose only child killed himself six months earlier. The wife won't face the issue of suicide; the husband won't face the issue of homosexuality. The audience gets the point within the first ten minutes and then spends the next two hours waiting for the light to come on in the couple's befogged minds. Robert Falls is the director. (4/14/97) (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

LONG RUNS

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **BRING IN DA NOISE, BRING IN DA FUNK:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Win-

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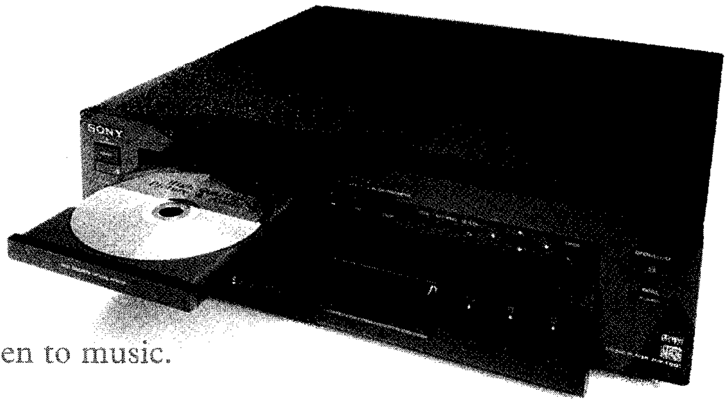

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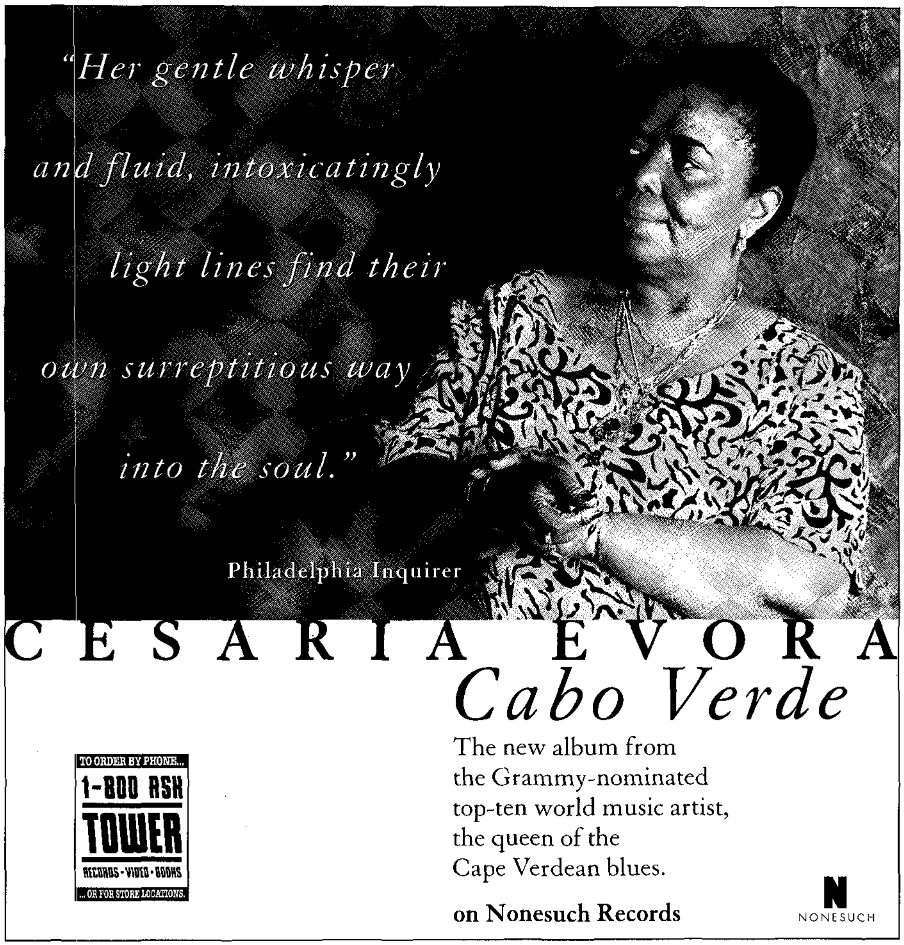
SONY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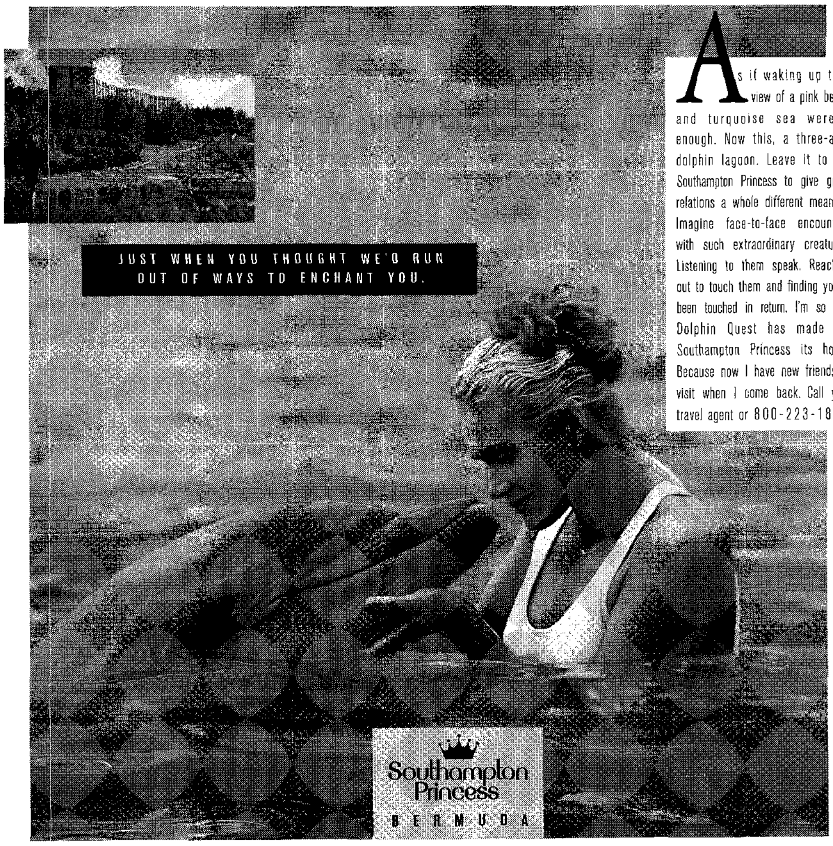
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DANCE

New York City Ballet—May 28 at 8: "Circus Polka," "Interplay," "Dances at a Gathering," and "West Side Story Suite." . . . ¶ May 29 at 8: "Serenade," "La Stravaganza," and "Fearful Symmetries." . . . ¶ May 30 at 8: "Allegro Brillante," "Pavane," the première of Christopher d'Amboise's "Circle of Fifths," and "Prodigal Son." . . . ¶ May 31 at 2: "Circus Polka," "Allegro Brillante," "A Schubertiad," and "West Side Story Suite." . . . ¶ May 31 at 8: "Kammermusik No. 2," "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux," "A Schubertiad," and "Stravinsky Violin Concerto." . . . ¶ June 1 at 3: "Fearful Symmetries," "The Steadfast Tin Soldier," "Open Strings," and "West Side Story Suite." . . . ¶ June 3 at 8: "Serenade," "Circle of Fifths," and "West Side Story Suite." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through June 29.)

American Ballet Theatre—May 28 at 2 and 8 and May 29 at 8: "La Bayadère, Act II," a selection of pas de deux, and "Theme and Variations." . . . ¶ May 30 and June 2-3 at 8, and May 31 at 2 and 8: "Coppélia." (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000. Through July 5.)

Elisa Monte Dance—The nine-member company brings three programs, with both repertory and newer works, including the première of "Sticks and Stones," choreographed by Monte and David Brown. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. May 28-31 at 8 and June 1 at 2 and 7:30.)

Iréne Hultman Dance—The choreographer presents two works, "Cascade," a thrust-and-parry meditation on courtship danced on a checkerboard floor, and "First Act," the choreographer's nod to her Nordic origins, set to Scandinavian folk tunes. With Chrysa Parkinson and Petter Jacobsson. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. May 29-June 1 at 8:30.)

"Sightlines"—*Soundance, the company of dancer*-choreographers (Seán Curran, Heidi Latsky, Lonne Moretton, Sandra Stratton-Gonzalez, Chris DC Ramos), presents a program that includes Moretton's "Through the Haze" and Ramos's "Gravity's Players." (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. May 28-31 at 8.)

"Shadows Tearing"—*In what was formerly the* Old American Can Factory, near the Gowanus Canal, choreographer Sham Mosher and dancers Darrell Jones and Melissa Wynn perform a full-length work that considers the role of fire in African-American history. (230 3rd St., at Third Ave., Brooklyn. For information, call 212-613-5489. May 29-June 1 at 8. Through June 8.)

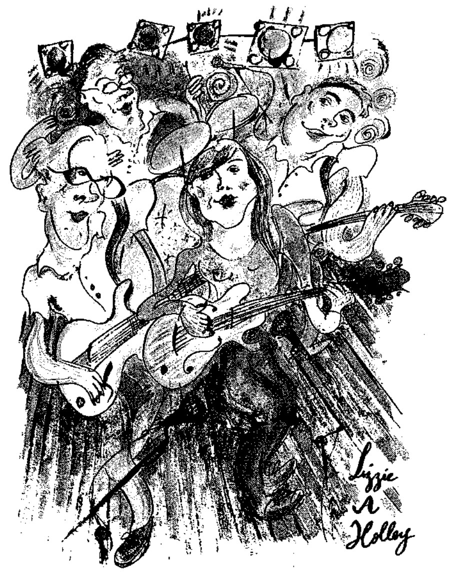
NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

Jamiroquai—England's love affair with African-American music hasn't waned since the glory days of the Beatles and the Stones. From the same U.K. scene that brought you Soul II Soul and the Brand New Heavies comes this funk-pop group, led by Jason Kay, a twenty-seven-year-old white man whose voice sounds remarkably like Stevie Wonder's. In the band's energetic live shows, this self-described "space cowboy" tends to wax philosophical about the spirit, the environment, and street-level politics, over fluid, upbeat jams. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. May 28 at 8.)

Electric Light Orchestra, Part II—The first band to successfully channel the glam histrionics of Parliament-Funkadelic through a string section, ELO set the standard for pomp during its glory "Don't Bring Me Down" days in the seventies. Though this performance should be a boon to nostalgia buffs, it's worth noting that the group's co-founder and auteur, Jeff Lynne, who these days spends most of his time producing other acts (Paul McCartney is his latest client), will not be appearing. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. May 29 at 8.)

Susanna Hoffs—The former lead singer of the eighties' second-best girl group, the Bangles. With neo-folkie Patti Rothberg. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391. May 29 at 8:30.)



Bettie Serveert, at Irving Plaza.

LIZZIE HOLLEY

Tibetan Alliance Benefit—The Drepung Loseling monks, Tibetan multi-instrumentalist Nawang Khechong, drummer Yoshi Shimada, and world-music artists Lorenza Ponce and Pauline Oliveros celebrate the Dalai Lama's visit to the city. (Ethical Culture Society, 2 W. 64th St. May 30 at 8.)

"A World of Percussion"—The first evening of this year's drumming festival features tabla virtuoso Zakir Hussain, conga master Giovanni Hidalgo, talking-drum adept Sikuru Adepoju, and renowned percussionist Nana Vasconcelos; the second features the Japanese ensemble Soh Daiko, the Sing Sing Rhythms of Senegal, drummer Jack DeJohnette, and Mr. Vasconcelos. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. May 30-31 at 8.)

Patti Page—Some statistics: Patti Page (the Singing Rage) grew up in Claremore, Oklahoma, with ten brothers and sisters. She had at least one song in Billboard's Top 100 every year between 1948 and 1982. Her single "Tennessee Waltz" is the second-biggest-selling song of all time. (You know the first—it's about Christmas.) She is celebrating her golden anniversary in show business. (Carnegie Hall. May 31 at 8.)

U2—They've been many things in their seventeen-year career—New Romantics, Christian rockers, Bukowski apologists, devilish fops, screenwriters, film stars—but the one thing Bono and the biggest band in the world have never been before is irrelevant. Such is the position that U2—caught between the youthful, zeitgeist-channelling energy of bands like the Chemical Brothers and the Prodigy (see Irving Plaza) and the chart-topping piffle of such bubble-gum acts as Hanson and the Spice Girls—suddenly finds itself in. "Pop" is an intermittently brilliant album that holds its own against the group's earlier efforts, but, in the strange musical cosmology that is 1997, no one seems to care. That said, the band can still fill football arenas, and recent reports about the "Pop Mart" tour confirm that it doesn't get any bigger than this. (Giants Stadium, the Meadowlands. 212-307-7171. May 31-June 1 and June 3, all at 8.)

John Fogerty—Of Creedence Clearwater Revival fame. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 564-4882. June 2-3 at 8.)

Indigo Girls—Before Ellen DeGeneres and Anne Heche, this Georgia folk duo was America's most beloved lesbian act. Their melodies, their soaring songwriting, and their no-nonsense stage show helped earn them the approval of everyone from Metallica boys to Vassar grad students. (Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. June 3 at 8.)

Erasure—The eighties-friendly synth-pop duo. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. June 3 at 8.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is always advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

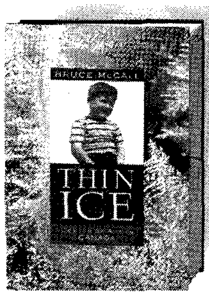
Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Vocalist **SUSANNAH MC CORKLE** is currently at work in the Oak Room. Dining.

Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Through May 31: **DAVE VALENTIN** has a tough job. As a Latin-jazz flutist, he's got to be twice as virile as the raging percussionists surrounding him while keeping in touch with the suave balladeer within. Encouraging the balance will be the ever dependable pianist **HILTON RUIZ**, whose idiomatic versatility laid the groundwork for the recent genre crosser Danilo Perez. June 1-2: **MARIAN MC PARTLAND**, the grande dame of mainstream piano, is still pretty frisky, and her playing is as elegant as ever. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through June 1: **NANCY WILSON** burst onto the scene back in 1959 with a thrilling voice, tremendous presence, a brilliant feel for the music, and a smoldering beauty that was impossible to resist. She just as quickly went the glossy supper-club route, playing the big casinos, making television appearances, and recording lush, uninspired albums. But live she's still got it. She appears here with her trio. From June 3: **"MANGIONE MADNESS,"** with Chuck himself. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through June, the inimitable **BOBBY SHORT**. On Mondays, **WOODY ALLEN** plays with the **EDDY DAVIS NEW ORLEANS JAZZ BAND**. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **BARBARA CARROLL** is in attendance.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through June 1: Instead of mellowing with time, **AHMAD JAMAL** gets more eccentric. A charming minimalist back in the fifties, the pianist has metamorphosed into a verbose extrovert with his own game plan of stop-and-start rhythms, mood-swing digressions, and catch-me-if-you-can shenanigans with his sidemen. What holds all this perversely fascinating stuff together is technique. Starting June 3: The **JAMES CARTER** quartet. Mondays belong to national treasure **LES PAUL**. Dining.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Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—A master meets a masterly acolyte when **oliver lake** shares a bill with **marty ehrlich** and his Dark Woods ensemble on May 28. Lake, a mainstay of the World Saxophone Quartet, has been pushing against the boundaries of jazz for some three decades now; if he's becoming a tad more conservative these days, you can be sure he'll still add a lemon twist of distinction to the proceedings. Ehrlich, a virtuoso on all manner of reeds who listened long and hard to the pioneering work of Lake and his forward-thinking cohorts, can play any style in the jazz canon. The Dark Woods ensemble explores his edgy take on chamber jazz.

Red Blazer Too, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—May 28: **kenny davern,** our premier clarinet traditionalist, is ballasted here by an able ensemble including pianist **john bunch** and bassist **greg cohen.**

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Through June 1: **kenny garrett** played in Miles Davis's late-eighties bands, but those high-profile gigs didn't show off half of what he could do with a horn. His pedigree includes stints with two other swing academies, the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra and Freddie Hubbard's band. His current high-powered excursions into the modal-bop mainstream make up for lost time. From June 3: The **paul motian electric bebop band.** Dining.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through June 1: The **lou donaldson** quartet. With one foot in well-turned bop soil and the other in R. & B. territory, Donaldson, an alto saxophonist, pledges allegiance to both virtuosity and entertainment. His timing—as a bop soloist and as a comic—has never been better. He's joined here by **dr. lonnie smith** on organ, **peter bernstein** on guitar, and **fukushi tainaka** on drums. Starting June 3: The **ray drummond** quintet. The **vanguard jazz orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

Visiones, 125 Macdougal St., at W. 3rd St. (673-5576)—June 1: West Coast pianist **denny zeitlin,** remembered fondly for his duet recordings with Charlie Haden, is too infrequently heard in these parts. He's supported here by another exceptional bassist, **david friesen.**

ROCK, ETC.

Arlene Grocery, 95 Stanton St., between Ludlow and Orchard Sts. (358-1633)—May 29: Extending the folk-jazz-mysterioso tradition is **eric wood,** a compelling singer-songwriter poised for a breakthrough. Also on the bill are the precocious Staten Island pop duo **professor and maryann** and the Lower East Side funk outfit **x 25** (né Xanax).

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—The three-woman operation called **betty,** a sort of cabaret act gone haywire, comes in May 29. On the same evening, Seattle's **laura love** and her band are here. Imagine the melodies of Irish music riding atop the busy rhythms of funk and jazz, and you'll have some idea of the sound that this talented bass-playing singer-songwriter calls "Afro-Celtic." May 31: Often hailed as the world's greatest bar band, **nrbq** can live up to the hype. There just isn't another outfit with such a mastery of virtually every American popular-music idiom, from rockabilly and blues to jazz and swing.

Brownies, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—Overshadowed by the more iconoclastic accomplishments of Courtney Love, Thalia Zedek, of **come** (May 29), is still one of the most formidable songwriters in the indie-rock pantheon.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—May 28: The strictly autobiographical folk-poems of **ferron.** May 30-31: Celtic pop with **susan mc keown and the chanting house.** The **mingus big band** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—May 29: The high-speed power pop of **supergrass.** With the **pulsars.** May 31: **bettie serveert.** This Amsterdam quartet (the name is Dutch for "Betty serves," a reference to some long-forgotten tennis legend) plays deeply satisfying garage rock with a lean, let's-make-a-record-in-a-day sound. It's a sunny alternative to a lot of overproduced American grunge. "Dust Bunnies," the group's new album, is a keeper: a fine mess of ragged guitars, lurching dynamics, and the pleading, impish voice of Carol van Dijk. June 3: The **prodigy.** Will the face of music in the twenty-first century be a man who shaves the top of his head and teases the rest of his green hair into two forbidding Bozo-the-clown-meets-Satan horns? Probably. Having already conquered the rest of the world with its churning, abrasively irresistible electronic dance music, this four-piece interracial mother ship rolls into America for a preview gig (before it headlines the Lollapalooza festival), backed by massive media scrutiny, a forthcoming record, and the Prada-bag budget of Madonna's Maverick records. Does the Prodigy deserve all the attention? Probably. Though chief songwriter Liam Howlett's material owes a heavy debt to some long-forgotten eighties knob twirlers, the impish lead singer, Keith Flint, has a manic charisma that suggests the arrival of the first post-millennial rock star. Is resistance futile? Probably.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—May 30: **run on** makes street-fighting alt-pop that sounds as though it were written and recorded in an afternoon, but the band is altogether too ingenious and brainy to qualify as your average slacker combo. Live, it's been known to make a mighty impressive noise. With the great **half japanese.**

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—May 28-29: Handsome-guy trumpeter **chris botti** may be the David Sanborn of the nineties. He's just released an exquisitely glossy new record, "Midnight Without You," on Verve. Except for one guest vocal (by Paul Buchanan, of the Blue Nile), it's full of the sort of chiaroscuro instrumental music that sounds perfect for Hollywood love scenes. May 30: **lazy boy.** This New York trio makes guitar-driven, noirish instrumental music that recalls the work of Chris Isaak (minus the vocals, of course) and of Angelo Badalamenti (particularly for David Lynch's movie "Wild at Heart").

Supper Club, 240 W. 47th St. (921-1940)—June 3: Up-and-coming rockers **third eye blind.**

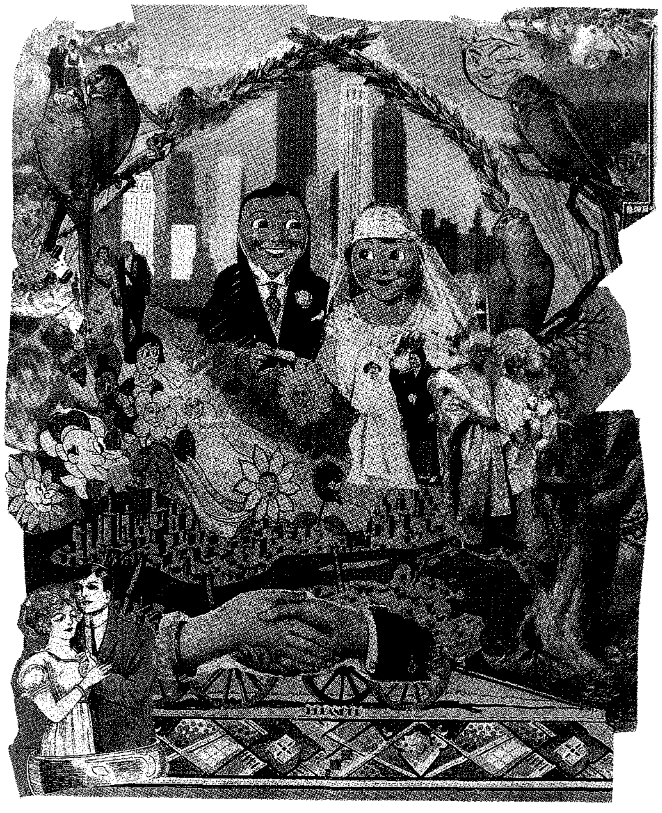
Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—May 29: In 1965, a tornado of a singer named **koko taylor** shook the rafters of Chicago's fabled Chess Records studios with "Wang Dang Doodle," her classic duet with Willie Dixon. As the reigning Queen of the Blues, she's won more W. C. Handy Awards than any other female blues performer—and at sixty-something she can still shake a rafter or two. With **beau jocque and the zydeco hi-rollers.** May 30: The Meters bassist **george porter** lets loose his own band, **runnin' pardners.** June 3: **robert earl keen.** Like fellow Texans Steve Earle and Jimmie Dale Gilmore, this fine singer-songwriter packs a lot of hard-earned wisdom into his disarming tales of life on the road—and he has the cult following to prove it.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"Cartier: 1900-1939," a resplendent exhibition of bijous from the great jewelry workshops of Paris, London, and New York. Through Aug. 3. . . . ¶ "The Glory of Byzantium" is the museum's most spectacular exhibition in years, a colossal exploration of the art, history, and thought of what is known as the Second Golden Age of Byzantium, an era of unsurpassed imperial opulence which lasted from the mid-ninth century to the thirteenth. Through July 6. . . . ¶ "The Print in the North: The Age of Albrecht Dürer and Lucas van Leyden." Through July 13. . . . ¶ After two years of renovation and expansion, the museum's Chinese galleries reopen, with such masterpieces as the hand scroll "Elegant Gathering in the Apricot Garden" and the album leaf "Scholar Viewing a Waterfall" once again receiving visitors. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—"Objects of Desire: The Modern Still Life," an exhibition devoted to domestic arrangements, from Cézanne's apples to Warhol's Campbell's Soup cans. Through Aug. 26. . . . ¶ "More Than One: Twentieth Century Print Portfolios" assembles examples of serial presentations from Expressionism ("Hell," by Max Beckmann) to Conceptualism ("Demolished," by Rachel Whiteread). Through Sept. 2. . . . ¶ "Projects: Architecture as Metaphor." An exhibition of work by seven artists, including James Casebere and Y. Z. Kami, whose recent creations make broad use of architectural plans, geometric structures, and the like. Through June 3. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)


"New York Gets Married," at the Museum of the City of New York.

BRUCE HELANDER

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—"A Century of Sculpture: The Nasher Collection" features work by Brancusi, Giacometti, Matisse, Smith, and other twentieth-century artists. Through June 1. (Open Sun-advertisement

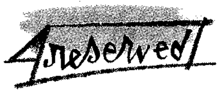
TASTE OF NEW YORK

The VISA® Preferred Guide to Dining

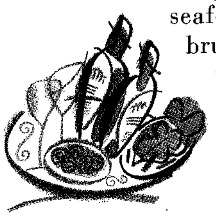
By Susan Breslow Sardone

Eating out is one of New York's greatest pleasures. And when there's an opportunity to enjoy a fine meal, as well as help the less fortunate, who can resist? Thanks to Visa and the "Taste of New York" restaurant program exclusive to *The New Yorker*, every time you charge a meal using your Visa® card at any of the participating restaurants in this and other "Taste of New York" features, you'll contribute to Citymeals-on-Wheels, the not-for-profit organization that delivers hot meals to the homebound elderly.* The following restaurants are among those involved in this vital effort.

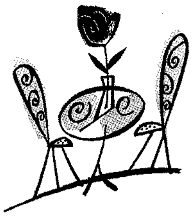
BECCO • 355 West 46th Street • 212-397-7597 A bigger Broadway bargain than a half-price matinee ticket, Becco has been pleasing theatergoers since 1993. The tightly packed upstairs and downstairs rooms hold a discriminating crowd, where you're as likely to overhear theater gossip as you are bravos for the hearty portions of Italian cuisine. From the inexpensive prix-fixe menu, diners can choose Caesar salad or seafood antipasti to start, then sample a combination of three different all-you-can-eat pastas, which change daily. If you're really hungry, add a third delicious course such as grilled salmon, free-range chicken, or osso buco. Any choice will convince you that Becco deserves a place among Restaurant Row's longest running hits.



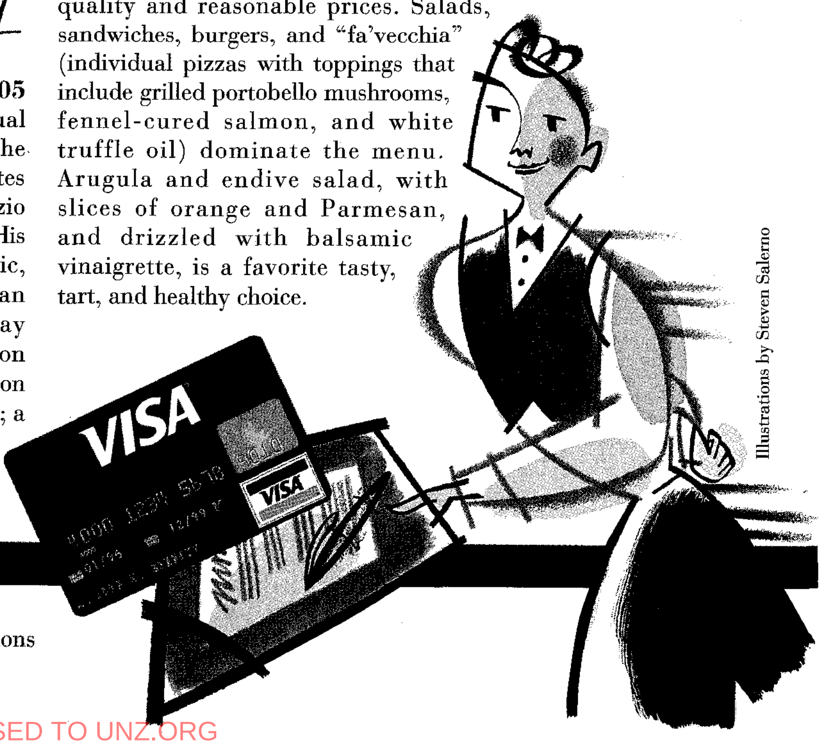
COCO PAZZO • 23 East 74th Street • 212-794-0205 Coco Pazzo on the Upper East Side suggests the casual elegance of the warm, intimate restaurants that dot the Italian countryside. While the restaurant's name translates into "crazy cook," Venetian-born executive chef Maurizio Marfoglia takes a sane and simple approach to cooking. His signature dishes include spaghetti with olive oil, garlic, crushed red pepper, and tomatoes, and a spicy Tuscan seafood stew. Portions are large, and Sunday brunch is served buffet-style. Limited-edition plates created by artist Franco Fontana are on display here and sell for twelve dollars each; a portion of the proceeds is donated to Citymeals-on-Wheels.



SHUN LEE PALACE • 155 East 55th Street • 212-371-8844 A glass dragon snakes its way along the ceiling of Shun Lee Palace, a symbol of the restaurant's fire-breathing offerings from several Chinese provinces. With Adam Tihany's artful décor and an inspired menu that also includes spa cuisine, the Palace makes a strong case for New Yorkers to forgo Chinese take-out, change out of their pajamas, and head for this elegant mid-town spot. The lobster roll appetizer alone—a crunchy cylinder stuffed with sweet shellfish—makes the trip worthwhile. Give the Palace twenty-four hour notice to prepare Beggar's Chicken—a dish combining chicken, pork, vegetables, herbs, and spices encased in lotus leaves and sprinkled with rose petal liqueur.



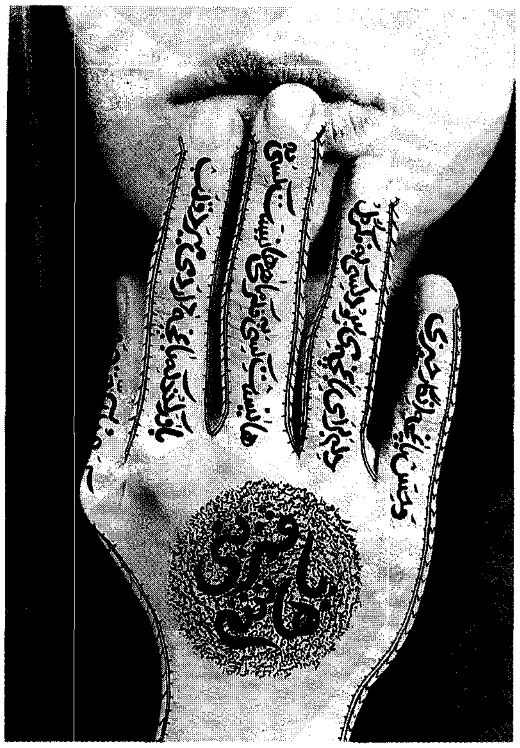
YELLOWFINGERS DI NUOVO • 200 East 60th Street • 212-751-8615 The perfect place to grab a pre-movie or a post-shopping bite, Yellowfingers di Nuovo is a lively American bistro with an Italian accent. For more than thirty years, this popular people-watching spot, with wraparound windows that overlook Third Avenue, has been feeding New Yorkers. And the restaurant's longevity testifies to its consistently good quality and reasonable prices. Salads, sandwiches, burgers, and "fa'vecchia" (individual pizzas with toppings that include grilled portobello mushrooms, fennel-cured salmon, and white truffle oil) dominate the menu. Arugula and endive salad, with slices of orange and Parmesan, and drizzled with balsamic vinaigrette, is a favorite tasty, tart, and healthy choice.



Illustrations by Steven Salerno

VISA. IT'S EVERYWHERE YOU WANT TO BE.®

*Visa has guaranteed a $100,000 minimum contribution to Citymeals-on-Wheels related to Visa card sales transactions at participating restaurant locations through 12/31/97. Void where prohibited or restricted.



Shirin Neshat, at Nosei (see Photography).

days through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—The fourth floor of the Biennial closes June 1; other sections close, in stages, by June 15. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—"Endangered! Exploring a World at Risk," an exhibition about vanishing and extinct species. Through Sept. 1. . . . ¶ "Up in Central Park: Birds and Birders" provides a guide to the discipline, with displays devoted to seasonal birds, fulltime residents, and the selected habitats of both in the adjacent park. Through Aug. 14. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"From Pockets to Pouches: Three Centuries of Handbags." More than forty pieces from the museum's collection demonstrate the evolution of the purse, from Colonial-era gaming bags to the elaborately beaded inventions of Judith Leiber. Through June 22. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5, and Saturday evenings until 9.)

Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St. (517-2742)—"Gods, Kings, and Tigers," a magnificent display of court paintings, drawings, and regalia, lent by the royal family of Kotah, a Hindu principality (until India achieved nationhood, fifty years ago) near Jaipur. Through July 20. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Bard Graduate Center, 18 W. 86th St. (501-3000)—"Masterworks: Italian Design, 1960-94," an exhibit chronicling the development of both the spare modernist aesthetic and the eclecticism that is its counterpart. Through Aug. 10. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (860-6894)—You may not recognize his name, but the industrial designer Henry Dreyfuss (1904-72) had a greater impact on the way the world looks today than any fine artist of the century. For Dreyfuss, form followed function only if it made for an elegant line. This informative, stylishly installed exhibition spans the period of America's industrial golden age, from the futuristic idealism of the Twentieth Century Limited (the high-speed train immortalized by Howard Hawks, with help from John Barrymore and Carole Lombard) to the homely simplicity of the Princess phone—not to mention the John Deere tractor, the Westclox Big Ben alarm clock, or the Polaroid Swinger. Through Aug. 31. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. (288-0700)—"The Proud Republic: Dutch Medals of the Golden Age." More than forty examples of seventeenth-century work, predominantly in high relief, with full-face and three-quarter-view portraits—of Cromwell, Joost van den Vondel, Maarten Tromp, and their ilk—and reverse scenes of sea battles and cityscapes and allegorical tableaux. Through July 27. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

Grolier Club, 47 E. 60th St. (838-6690)—"The Collector Collected: The Horblit Archive of Sir Thomas Phillipps." Correspondence, photographs, legal papers, and, of course, books belonging to the nineteenth-century bibliomane. Through July 31. (Open daily, except Sundays, 10 to 5.)

Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. (832-1155)—"Enlightenment Embodied: The Art of the Japanese Buddhist Sculptor." To inaugurate its exquisitely redesigned galleries, and to celebrate its ninetieth anniversary, the society has assembled a once-in-a-lifetime exhibition of Japanese Buddhist sculptures, ranging from a tiny, naïve bronze of the infant Siddhartha to a life-size thirteenth-century polychrome wood carving of the reclining Buddha at the point of death. A unique seven-hundred-year-old sculpture of Monju, the bodhisattva of wisdom, is made of lacquered paper. The guest curator, Hiromitsu Washizuka, from the Tokyo National Museum, has brought over some of Japan's most precious art works: indeed, the Japanese government has officially designated one of them (a serene bronze relief of the Buddha preaching to his disciples, from seventh-century Nara) a national treasure. In addition to the objects borrowed from museums, the exhibit includes several images removed from temples where they've been enshrined for centuries; priests in Japan dislodged the statues' "souls" before their journey to foreign shores and will resanctify them after their return home. Through July 6. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 5.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St. (685-0008)—"Private Histories: Four Centuries of Journal Keeping" presents the personal records of such diarists as Charlotte Brontë, Victor Hugo's daughter Adèle, Walt Whitman, and Sylvia Plath. Through Aug. 31. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10:30 to 5; Saturdays, 10:30 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6.)

Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (534-1672)—"New York Gets Married: Dressing for a Special Day, 1765-1997" brings gowns worn by Morgans and Rockefellers out of the mothballs, along with newer ones for, say, a bride who met her man in an Internet chat room and such other essential items as monogrammed wedding-cake boxes and leather-bound brunch menus. Through Sept. 21. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, uptown and downtown galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; Chelsea galleries are generally closed Tuesdays and open Sundays.)

Richard Artschwager—A suite of impeccably tasteful paintings, in textured acrylic, of potatoes, with most of the canvases set inside the artist's signature plywood boxes. Through June 28. (Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 752-2929.)

Jac Leirner—Business cards, hung from the ceiling and mounted in strips along the wall, by a noted Brazilian Conceptualist. Through June 5. (Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St. 315-0470.)

George Segal—An impressive new batch of plaster-cast sculptures and a series of charcoal-and-pastel portraits, by the sculptor who created the figures for the newly opened Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial, in Washington, D.C. Through June 6. (Janis, 110 W. 57th St. 586-0110.)

Wayne Thiebaud—Paintings and drawings from the emperor of ice cream. The selection includes examples from his pastry and pie paintings, his vertiginous streetscapes, and a new series of delicious flatland vistas in his signature high-cholesterol palette. Through June 27. (Stone, 113 E. 90th St. 988-6870.)

"Alfred Jensen and Tony Smith: Personal Geometry"—A show exploring the work of two artists who put their own stamp on the tradition of geometric abstraction. Smith (1912-80) is a legendary figure. His monumental sculpture "Moondog," currently on view at Paula Cooper, is one of the highlights of the season. (See Galleries—Chelsea.) The works here—much smaller, but still splendid—include a small bronze version of "Moondog," as well as a small cast bronze version of one of Smith's most famous monumental sculptures, "Smoke" (1967). Jensen (1903-81) doesn't have quite as high a profile. He produced vividly colored paintings, and, while he was drawn to diagrammatic arrangements, often including quasi-mystical symbols and numerals, his style leaned toward thick, clotted impastos. Through June 20. (Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292.)

"CityScapes"—An exhibit of urban images in which some impressive work turns up: Red Grooms's funky sculptural fantasia of a traffic jam of limousines in front of the Plaza Hotel; a cool, futuristic city in aluminum-and-zinc modules, by Miguel Navarro; and three flawless pencil drawings of the fairy spires of 57th Street, by Avigdor Arikha. Through June 7. (Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900. Open Mondays.)

"Mexico Self-Portraits"—A remarkable collection of twentieth-century paintings and drawings, which runs the gamut from an early, sombre José Clemente Orozco to a series of exuberant fantasies by the contemporary painters Julio Galán and Ray Smith. An unusually naturalistic Diego Rivera shows the artist holding a scroll with an inscription, in the style of Baroque Spanish portraits. It's paired with a witty work in pencil, of Rivera drawing his image in a mirror, which is dramatically reflected in another mirror. Through June 13. (Associated American Artists, 20 W. 57th St. 399-5510.)

Short List—**PAT ADAMS,** Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223. Open Mondays, closed Saturdays; through June 21. . . . **HUGO BASTIDAS,** Haime, 41 E. 57th St. 888-3550. Open Mondays; through June 20. . . . **ANDRÁS BÖRÖCZ,** Baumgold, 128 E. 72nd St. 861-7338. Through June 14. . . . **SAINT CLAIR CEMIN,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454. Through June 21. . . . **FRANCESCO CLEMENTE,** Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 744-2313. Through June 14. . . . **ELENA CLIMENT,** Martin, 23 E. 73rd St. 288-2213. Through June 28. . . . **RICHARD ESTES,** Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900. Open Mondays; through June 7. . . . **GLEN HANSEN** and **BARBARA DIXON DREWA,** Fischbach, 24 W. 57th St. 759-2345. Both shows through June 21. . . . **IDA KOHLMEYER,** Ryan, 24 W. 57th St. 397-0669. Through June 14. . . . **LI HUAYI,** Kaikodo, 164 E. 64th St. 223-0121. Through June 7. . . . **HENRI MATISSE,** Hirschl & Adler Modern, 21 E. 70th St. 535-8810. Through June 20. . . . **MASAYUKI NAGARE,** McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. 319-1996. Open Mondays; through June 30. . . . **ARIC OBROSEY,** Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 535-5767. Through June 27. . . . **JOHN SLOAN,** Kraushaar, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 307-5730. Through June 6. . . . **JOAQUÍN TORRES-GARCÍA,** Krugier, 41 E. 57th St. 755-7288. Through July 18.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Tony Feher—Modest sculptures utilizing mundane, typically disposable objects: Styrofoam packing materials, plastic and glass bottles, marbles, bottle tops, tin cans, and, in one case, plastic flowers planted in a block of concrete. Through June 21. (D'Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St. 352-9460. Open Tuesdays; closed Sundays.)

ONLY CONNECT

Museum of Bad Art (http://glyphs.com/moba)—The curators of Boston's Museum of Bad Art may not know art, but they know what makes them sick. A community-based project with several galleries in the Boston area and a home on the Web, MOBA is "dedicated to the collection, preservation, exhibition and celebration of bad art in all its forms and in all its glory." Its grand mission notwithstanding, MOBA's scope is humble. Most of the paintings reproduced here were picked out of the trash (where, you might agree, they rightfully belong); "More," for instance, an acrylic portrait of what looks like a rotten plum with three fried eggs for eyes, was found discarded and hung in the museum's permanent gallery. The artist, Sandy (Sangfroid) Winslow, heard from a friend where his work had ended up, and he promptly called the gallery to say that if they liked *that* painting, he had some in his studio that were much worse.

In its own quirky way, MOBA is a tribute to the indomitable spirit of the determined dauber. Sadly, though, even bad art has its critics. In early March, during one of the museum's gala events, the painting "Eileen" was stolen from an outdoor exhibit. "Eileen" was more than a gruesome portrait: it was a cornerstone of the collection, and it has been reproduced on T-shirts, key chains, and refrigerator magnets. Before its acquisition, the painting, which seems to bear two signatures, had been slashed with a knife and trashed. Could one of its authors have stolen from the crowd to steal his work back? We may never know. Numerous pleas for its safe return have fallen on deaf ears. An initial reward of $6.50 ballooned in a week, with the help of concerned museum members, to $33.65. Supporters have made admirable attempts to replace "Eileen" through homage and imitation, though the work of one pretender was greeted with catcalls at a public showing. It just wasn't bad enough.

Maureen Gallace—Small paintings of country roads and houses in landscape settings. Initially, their conventional subject matter is utterly soothing; only after a moment's reflection do you come to dwell on the spatial incongruities, or on the fact that none of the buildings are equipped with doors or windows. The images have an abstract quality, and they transmit a frisson of existential unease. Through June 14. (303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-1121. Open Tuesdays; closed Sundays.)

Gary Hume—Enamel paintings that alternately evoke the swinging London of the sixties and American Pop of the same period, rendered with a cool *fin de millénaire* sensibility. Through June 27. (Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 243-0200. Opens at noon; closed Sundays.)

Brice Marden—Two new paintings, displayed alongside five T'ang and Northern Wei dynasty epitaph stones on whose designs they are loosely based. It's well known that Chinese calligraphy has had a profound influence on the transformation of Marden's style from the monochrome panels for which he first gained renown, in the seventies, to the more gestural, weblike patterns he now favors. In his last show, he seemed to be moving away from more overt calligraphic schemas; while these new paintings continue in that stylistic direction, their proximity to the stones reiterates the artist's deep affinity for Chinese art. The installation itself is very elegant. The paintings—which seem more involved with illusionistic depth than his previous works—are superb. Through June 27. (Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200. Open Tuesdays; closed Sundays.)

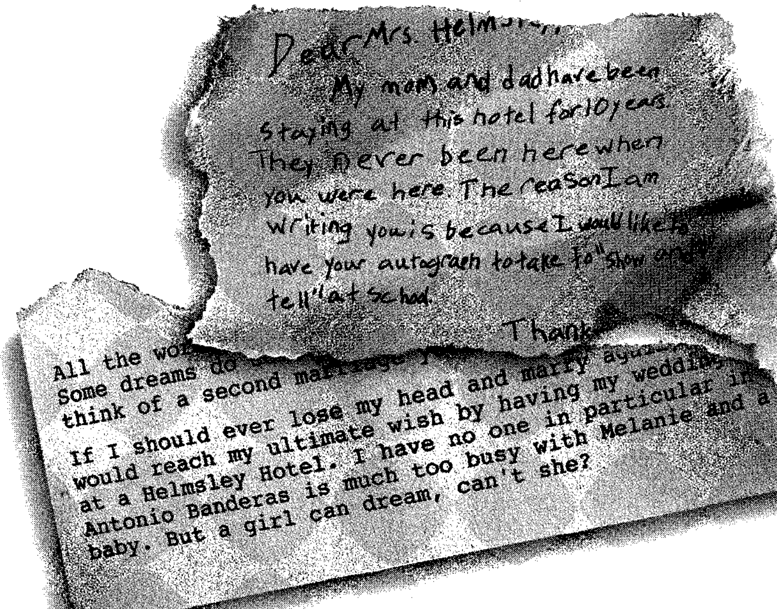
Marilyn Minter—Small, shiny paintings by an artist whose previous work has included floridly voluptuous images drawn from pornography. In these new canvases, she is fascinated (like a number of contemporary artists) by makeup and plastic surgery: she dwells on closeups of mascara-thick eyelashes, scary long nails, grotesquely luscious lips. Through June 8. (XL, 504 W. 22nd St. 462-4111.)

Tony Smith (1912-80)—Two sculptures and related works on paper. The showpiece here is "Moondog" (1964), a tower of octahedral columns rising some seventeen feet—one of the most impressive works of sculpture exhibited in New York recently. The show also includes the more modestly scaled but still remarkable "Smog" (1970), a colony of interlocking tetrahedrons. Through June 7. (Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 255-1105. Open Tuesdays; closed Sundays.)

"Broken Home"—Conceptualists from the sixties to the present (Gordon Matta-Clark, Absalon, Glen Seator, among others) weigh in on shelter and the life within it. Through June 7. (Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 463-7770. Open Tuesdays; opens Sundays at noon.)

Short List—**andrew ehrenworth,** Clementine, 526 W. 26th St. 243-5937. Through June 15. . . . **catherine howe,** Maynes, 529 W. 20th St. 741-3318. Through June 14. . . . **jim shaw** and **gary simmons,** Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100. Both shows through June 7. . . . **meg webster,** Morris Healy, 530 W. 22nd St. 243-3753. Through June 28.

WHEN IT COMES TO YOU-KNOW-WHO, PEOPLE WILL TALK. THEY'LL ALSO WRITE.



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GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Guillermo Kuitca—"Poema Pedagógico," a series of new paintings in which the Argentine artist continues his psychologically charged explorations of architecture; once again, architectural space becomes intensely metaphoric and expressionistic. Previous series have emphasized the diagrammatic, geometric order of architectural plans, but in these new works the lines become skewed, nervous, directionless; the sense of foreboding is far darker. The execution remains impeccable. Through June 7. (Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St. 431-3685.)

Sean Landers—Paragon of the "loser" trend in contemporary art, Landers is best known for lengthy, hilarious text paintings and excruciatingly self-revelatory videos. Now, perhaps weary of self-exposure, he has turned to more conventional paintings, which nevertheless stay close to the narcissistic woundedness of his previous work. They are large and cartoonish, and their subject matter is pure Landers: a picnic scene featuring a leering robot and a strangely buxom rabbit, a group of aliens lost at sea. Through May 31. (Rosen, 130 Prince St. 941-0203.)

Elizabeth Murray—Recent paintings by an artist known for her clever hybridization of abstract and representational forms. While the relief surfaces of her shaped canvases seem to have become shallower, the formal vigor that animates their incongruous elements remains vivid. Looking over these paintings, you can't help remarking the breadth of her influence on younger artists mining the tradition of biomorphic abstraction. Through June 20. (Pace Wildenstein, 142 Greene St. 431-9224.)

"Rajasthani Miniatures"—Watercolors from the fifteenth century through the nineteenth, depicting idealized scenes from the lives of the princely castes of northwestern India. Through June 7. (The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 219-2166. Open Wednesday evenings until 8.)

Short List—**MARK DI SUVERO,** Gagosian, 136 Wooster St. 228-2828. Through June 14. . . . **GILBERT AND GEORGE,** Lehmann Maupin, 39 Greene St., 965-0753; and Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway, 966-6160. Both shows through June 28. . . . **JOHN MC CRACKEN,** Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074. Through June 21. . . . **ELLIOTT PUCKETTE,** Kasmin, 74 Grand St. 219-3219. Through June 14. . . . **BEATRICE RIESE,** A.I.R., 40 Wooster St. 966-0799. Through June 14. . . . **JULIE ROBERTS,** Sean Kelly, 43 Mercer St. 343-2405. Through July 3. . . . **ALEXIS ROCKMAN,** Gorney, 100 Greene St. 966-4480. Through June 28. . . . **EDWIN SCHLOSSBERG,** Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232. Through May 31. . . . **NEDKO SOLAKOV,** Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300. Through June 7. . . . **IONEL TALPAZAN,** American Primitive, 594 Broadway. 966-1530. Through July 12.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Sotheby's—May 28: Pre-Columbian pieces. . . . ¶ May 29-30: Latin-American art, including Tamayo's monumental canvas "Sandías" and Rivera's 1917 oil "Paysage de Toledo," as well as important works by José Clemente Orozco and Wifredo Lam. . . . ¶ May 31: Antiquities. . . . ¶ June 3: Rare books. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

Christie's—May 28-29: Paintings, drawings, and sculptures by modernist and contemporary Latin-American artists, including Claudio Bravo and Fernando Botero. . . . ¶ May 30: Antiquities. (Park Ave. at 59th St. 546-1000.)

Swann—A sale of autographs (letters, documents, inscribed books, and so on), particularly strong in literary items, including a pair of letters from J. D. Salinger. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710. June 3.)

Phillips—An auction of fine wines, particularly notable for offerings of 1978 and 1982 Bordeaux. (406 E. 79th St. 570-4830. June 3.)

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PHOTOGRAPHY

Helen Levitt / Édouard Baldus (1813-89)—Forty vintage New York prints from 1936 to 1945. (See also I.C.P. Midtown.) Through June 27. / Twenty architectural photographs of Paris, by one of the early masters. Through May 31. (Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. 226-1220.)

Shirin Neshat—The artist's new series of photographs with calligraphy applied explores the relations between men and women and the taboos of the body in Islamic culture. (Nosei, 530 W. 22nd St. 741-8695. Open Tuesdays; closed Sundays.)

"Glorious Gardens"—Inflorescent imagery from throughout the present century, by such artists as Atget, Sudek, Blossfeldt, Porter, and Meyerowitz. Through June 28. (Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766.)

International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. (860-1777)—"Art & Science: Investigating Matter," a series of laboratory photographs by Catherine Wagner. Through June 15. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. (860-1777)—"Helen Levitt: Crosstown," a retrospective of the premier New York street photographer's career. . . . ¶ "Fast Forward: Growing Up in the Shadow of Hollywood," Lauren Greenfield's recent series on Los Angeles youth. (A complementary show of prints from this series is at Saul, 560 Broadway, 431-0747, through June 28.) Both shows through Sept. 7. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Short List—**MARIO ALGAZE,** Throckmorton, 153 E. 61st St. 223-1059. Through July 5. . . . **ROBERT BLACKMON,** Mann, 42 E. 76th St. 570-1223. Through June 28. . . . **MARILYN BRIDGES,** Burden, 20 E. 23rd St. 505-5555. Through July 31. . . . **LYLE ASHTON HARRIS,** Erben, 476 Broome St. 966-5283. Through June 21. . . . **DAVE HEATH,** Lowinsky, 578 Broadway. 226-5440. Through June 28. . . . **ERIC LINDBLOOM,** Gallery 292, 120 Wooster St. 431-0292. Through June 21. . . . **TINA MODOTTI,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454. Through June 21. . . . **JOHN PFAHL,** Borden, 560 Broadway. 431-0166. Through June 30. . . . **CLIFFORD ROSS,** Houk Friedman, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. 628-5300. Through June 14. . . . **LYNN SAVILLE,** Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255. Through June 28. . . . **FRANK STEWART,** Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051. Opens Saturdays at noon; through June 14. . . . **PIERRE VERGER,** Witkin, 415 West Broadway. 925-5510. Through June 28. . . . **JOEL-PETER WITKIN,** Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999. Through June 21.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(The box-office number for Alice Tully Hall is 875-5050, and for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 501-3330.)

OPERA

Glimmerglass Preview—Two evenings of conversation and music, designed to introduce listeners to a pair of works that the Cooperstown-based Glimmerglass Opera will present this summer. May 28 at 8: Carlisle Floyd's "Of Mice and Men." . . . ¶ May 29 at 8: Gluck's "Iphigénie en Tauride." (Merkin Concert Hall.)

"The Crucible"—Excerpts from Robert Ward's opera (based on the Arthur Miller play), performed in concert by American Opera Projects. (Trinity Church, Broadway at Wall St. May 29 at 1. Admission by contribution.)

American Chamber Opera Company—Presenting the première of Melissa Shiflett's "Dora," based on Freud's famous case study of 1905. (Liederkranz Club, 6 E. 87th St. May 30 at 8. For information about tickets, call 781-0857.)

Amato Opera Company—Presenting "The Merry Widow," in English. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. May 31 at 7:30 and June 1 at 2:30.)

Center for Contemporary Opera—Offering a double bill of Martin Kalmanoff's "The Bald

Alphornist Mike Svoboda, performing at Goethe House and the Swiss Institute.

DUPUY-BERBERIAN

Soprano" (after Ionesco, with narrator Kitty Carlisle Hart and tenor Lawrence Harris, a former pro-football star) and Mark Bucci's "Tale for a Deaf Ear." (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. May 31 at 8 and June 1 at 3.)

"Suppose a Wedding"—The staged première of Leonard Lehrman's one-act opera based on Bernard Malamud's "Scene of a Play," along with short works by Albert Tepper, Janis Hill, and Mira Spektor. (Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion, 1 W. 4th St. June 1 at 3. No tickets necessary.)

"Lilith"—The première of a new opera by Deborah Drattell, with a cast headed by soprano Lauren Flanigan. Ransom Wilson conducts. (Dicapo Opera Theatre, 184 E. 76th St. June 2-3 at 8. Through June 8. For information about tickets, call 996-1100.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—Tchaikovsky's "Rococo Variations" (a sort of cello concerto sometimes called "Variations on a Rococo Theme") is almost always heard in an edition that was vastly revised from the composer's 1876 original by Wilhelm Karl Friedrich Fitzenhagen, the cellist for whom the piece was written. Tchaikovsky tended to assume the worst about the music he wrote, and was notorious for caving in to even the most inane suggestions of others. It's hard to understand why Fitzenhagen felt that the variations needed to be reordered (and one of them deleted entirely), but the composer acceded to his preference, authorizing the revisions when the work was printed (though the publisher remained mystified). Carter Brey, the Philharmonic's principal cellist, stumbled across a rare score of the Variations in a used-music shop and realized it did not include Fitzenhagen's emendations. Struck by the manifestly better logic of Tchaikovsky's original version, he had the orchestral parts copied out. In these final subscription concerts of the season, Mr. Brey is the soloist in the Philharmonic's first performances of the original version of this popular classic. Also on the program are Tchaikovsky's "Romeo and Juliet" Fantasy-Overture, Respighi's "Brazilian Impressions," and Hindemith's Concert Music for Strings and Brass. Kurt Masur conducts. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. May 29-31 at 8.)

New York Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra—Raffael Adler leads a program that includes Schubert's C-Minor Overture for Strings and Mozart's E-Flat-Major Piano Concerto (K. 271, with Yin Ma). (Alice Tully Hall. May 28 at 8.)

New American Chamber Orchestra—Maxim Shostakovich conducts his father's Chamber Symphony for Strings, Concerto No. 1 for Piano, Trumpet, and Orchestra (with pianist Vladimir Viardo and trumpeter Ilya Shteynman), and Symphony No. 14 (featuring soprano Oksana Krovytska and bass Anatoly Panchoshny). (Alice Tully Hall. May 29 at 8.)

Canticum Novum Singers—Poulenc's Gloria, Allegri's "Miserere," J. S. Bach's "Singet dem Herrn," and C. P. E. Bach's "Heilig," directed by Harold Rosenbaum. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. May 31 at 8. For information about tickets, call 914-763-3453.)

New York Chamber Symphony—Gerard Schwarz conducts Weill's "Threepenny Opera" Suite and Violin Concerto (with Dmitry Sitkovetsky), as well as Beethoven's "Elegiac Song" (Op. 118, with the New York Chamber Symphony Chorus) and Symphony No. 6. (Alice Tully Hall. May 31 at 8 and June 1 at 5.)

Central City Chorus—Charles Pilling directs period-instrument performances of Bach's A-Major Mass, Handel's "Chandos" Anthem No. 7 ("My Song Shall Be Alway"), and two works by Vivaldi. (Central Presbyterian Church, Park Ave. at 64th St. June 2 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

Florilegium Chamber Choir—JoAnn Rice leads works by Miriam Gideon (including her "Sacred Service" and "Shirat Miriam L-Shabbat") and Judith Lang Zaimont (including the première of her "Meditations," for chorus, solo vocal quartet, and percussion). (German Church, 315 W. 22nd St. June 3 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

RECITALS

Bargemusic—Violinists Todd Phillips and Carmit Zori, violist Louise Williams, and cellist Peter Wyrick perform string quartets by Haydn (in B-Flat Major, Op. 50, No. 1), Shostakovich (his Seventh), and Dohnányi (his Second). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061. May 29 at 7:30 and June 1 at 4.)

Alphorns in Manhattan—A trombonist by training and profession, Guam-born and Illinois-bred Mike Svoboda left for Europe in 1981 and has worked there ever since, most notably as solo trombonist with the Berlin Radio Symphony and as a member of the Ensemble Modern. Drawn to the alphorn, the long wooden trumpet used by central European herdsmen for long-distance communication, in the past decade he has increasingly turned his attention to both the instrument's traditional repertoire and its possibilities in avant-garde music. He'll be in town this week cutting a disk at some of Manhattan's upper-altitude sites—atop a Times Square skyscraper, high up in the Statue of Liberty, at rooftop heliports—and, joined by his fellow-alphornist Ingo Ahmels, he'll present two separate programs closer to sea level. May 29 at 8: "Delicate Songs for Loud Cities," a concert of new music for alphorns, by Cage, Stockhausen, Hans Otte, and others. (Goethe House, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ June 3 at 7: "Mike Svoboda's Alphorn Special," juxtaposing traditional alphorn music and modern works, with didgeridoo, conch shell, and garden hose augmenting the instrumentarium. (Swiss Institute, 495 Broadway, at Spring St. No tickets necessary.)

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Locrian Chamber Players—The contemporary-music group, assisted by the Pulse Percussion Ensemble and pianist Nils Vigeland, offers music by Cage, Feldman, James Tenney, John Kreckler, David Macdonald, and Mr. Vigeland. (Saint Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. May 30 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

Huberman String Quartet—The Israeli foursome offers two separate programs. June 1 at noon: Quartets by Haydn (in D Major, Op. 76, No. 5), Beethoven (in E-Flat Major, Op. 74, the “Harp”), and Bartók (his Third). (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 718-885-2478.) . . . ¶ June 1 at 6 and 8: Quartets by Beethoven (in F Major, Op. 59, No. 1) and Debussy. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. No tickets necessary.)

The Queen's Chamber Band—Though this ensemble (which comprises countertenor, strings, winds, lute, and harpsichord) usually focusses on Baroque music, it has also commissioned a small body of contemporary works. In this program, the instrumentalists unveil seven new compositions written expressly for them, by Robert Baksa, Stephen Kemp, Elodie Lauten, Charles Sibirsky, Peter M. Susser, and two members of the ensemble, countertenor Marshall Coid and flutist Daniel Waitzman. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. June 1 at 2. For information about tickets, call 932-9462.)

New York Camerata—The chamber group performs André Campra's motet “Domine, Dominus Noster,” Bartók's “Contrasts,” Aaron Jay Kernis's “Le Quattro Stagioni dalla Cucina Futurismo,” and Brahms's Clarinet Trio. (St. John's in the Village, 218 W. 11th St., at Waverly Pl. June 1 at 4. For information about tickets, call 866-3459.)

Parthenia—A viol consort, performing German Baroque music. (Nour Foundation, 322 W. 108th St. June 1 at 4. For information about tickets, call 917-969-4471.)

Barbara Meister and Shirley Schnitzer—Pianists, teaming up for four-hand music by Brahms, Debussy (his “Petite Suite”), and Schubert. (Mansfield Hotel, 12 W. 44th St. June 2 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

Harold Stover—The organist performs works by Bach, Mendelssohn, Ives, and others. (Second Presbyterian Church, 6 W. 96th St. June 3 at 7. Tickets at the door.)

North/South Consonance—Pianist Max Lifchitz leads his ensemble in works by Mary Jeanne Van Appledorn, Elaine Lebenbom, Bruce Saylor, Marilyn Ziffrin, Daniel Youngerman, and Bruce Taub. (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. June 3 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

Gabor Fuchs—Pianist, performing works by Liszt (including the “Sonetto 104 del Petrarca”), Georges Cziffra, Carl Tausig, Alkan, and Chopin (his B-Minor Sonata). (Merkin Concert Hall. June 3 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

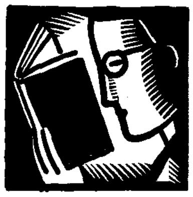
Pine Koans—Even if you miss the Dalai Lama's sold-out appearance at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine on May 29, keep the faith: on May 31, *Tricycle* magazine presents its annual Change Your Mind Day in Central Park, starting at 12:30 with opening remarks by various lamas. At 2:30, an American monk, Michael Roache, hosts a debate between members of the Sera Mey monastery, in southern India, on the meaning of nirvana (expect lots of yelling and screaming). The day ends, at 5, with group chanting and singing exercises. (Great Hill, on the west side of the Park near 106th St. For more information, call 800-950-7008.)

Beyond "Rent"—The Theatre for the New City has organized a free indoor-outdoor festival of cabaret, drama, dance, and music to highlight the Lower East Side's contributions to the arts. Among the hundred or so artists scheduled to hit the stage and the street from May 30 to June 1 are Ron Leibman, Richard Foreman, Charles Busch, Quentin Crisp, and Phoebe Légère. (155 First Ave., at 10th St. For more information, call 254-1109.)

Talks—May 28 at 6:30: Architect Robert F. Fox, Jr., discusses the environmental technology that went into designing the forty-eight-story Condé Nast Building, under construction at Four Times Square. (Parsons Auditorium, Parsons School of Design, 66 Fifth Ave., near 13th St. For reservations, which are required, call 924-7000.) . . . ¶ May 29 at 6:15: Christine Nelson, curator of the Morgan Library's current exhibition on journals, considers the reasons that people keep diaries. (29 E. 36th St. Tickets at the door.) . . . ¶ May 30, from 9 to 5: Former Presidential candidate Barry Commoner celebrates his eightieth birthday by joining Ralph Nader, Peter Montague, and other environmental activists in a symposium on the modern ecology movement. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. For more information, call 718-670-4180.) . . . ¶ May 31 at 11 and 1:30: Fight choreographer Steven Andresen and a troupe of sabre-bearing assistants demonstrate sword-fighting techniques, with the help of sequences from such movies as “The Phantom of the Opera,” “Zorro's Fighting Legion,” and “The Three Musketeers.” (Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center. 875-5050.)

Walk—May 28 at 9:15 A.M.: Seth Kamil leads a Heritage Trails walking tour of the financial district. (For reservations, call 888-487-2457.)

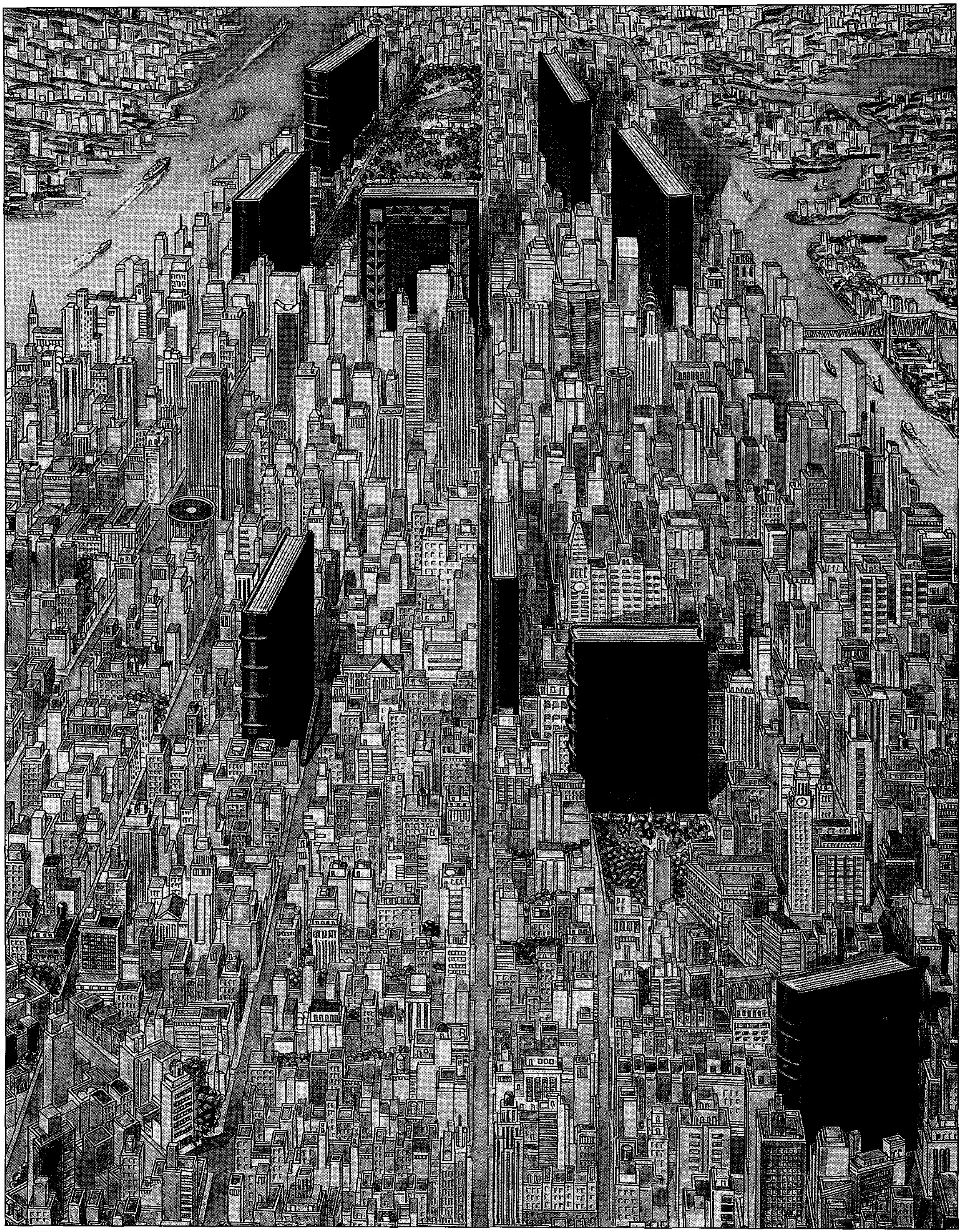
BOOKINGS



Final Draught—On the first Tuesday in June, at An Béal Bocht Café, a pint-size Irish pub on a steeply sloped side street in Riverdale, Sharon Olds will read works from her latest collection, “The Wellspring,” as well as more recent poems, basing her selection on “the spirit of the group” and on her own mood: “I need to decide on that day, since I'm no longer the person who wrote the poem, and it's good to have the person who's doing the reading choose the poem.” Olds's verse is often centered on her family, but even when her subject is a broken butter dish or old blue jeans, she almost invariably returns to images of the body, to flesh and blood. Don't ask her, though, to explain the connection between the page and her life: “There's a difference between the paper world and the world of the flesh. And people who are reading are not even connected to paper—their words are in the air.” (445 W. 238th St., the Bronx. June 3 at 8:30. No tickets necessary.)

More Readings—May 28 at 8: Poet Ron Padgett reads his verse. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Tickets at the door.) . . . ¶ May 29 at 7: Cristina Garcia (“Dreaming in Cuban”) reads from her second novel, “The Agüero Sisters.” (Three Lives & Company, 154 W. 10th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ June 2 at 7:30: Joyce Carol Oates reads recent work. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 645-5848.) . . . ¶ June 2 at 7:30: Lucy Grealy (“Autobiography of a Face”) and Karl Kirchwey read their poetry. (K.G.B. 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ June 3 at 8:30 A.M.: Publisher Harold Evans moderates a breakfast discussion on modern Irish literature, with scholar Denis Donoghue, authors Mary Gordon, Colm Tóibín, and Frank McCourt, and actor Malachy McCourt. (Fred's, at Barney's, 10 E. 61st St. For reservations, which are required, call 940-7480.) . . . ¶ June 3 at 7:30: Rohinton Mistry reads from his novel “A Fine Balance.” (Barnes & Noble, 33 E. 17th St. No tickets necessary.)

A BOOK LOVERS' VIEW OF MANHATTAN



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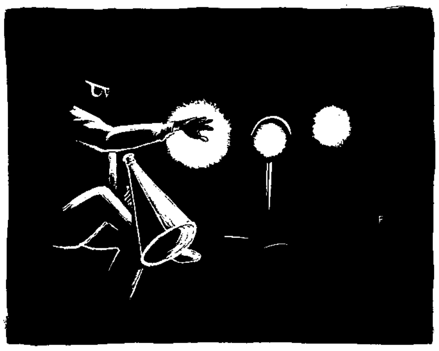


THE MOVIES

FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

GONE FISHIN'—The comic adventures of two buddies (Danny Glover and Joe Pesci) trying to get to the Everglades for a fishing vacation they've won. Also with Nick Brimble, Rosanna Arquette, and Lynn Whitfield. Directed by Christopher Cain. Opening May 30. (84th Street Sixplex, 86th Street East Twin, Embassy 3, 19th Street East 6, Sutton, and Village East Cinemas.)

MONDO—The tale of a mysterious ten-year-old Gypsy and the strangers on the streets of Nice who help him out. Directed by Tony Gatliff, who adapted the screenplay from J. M. G. Le Clezio's 1978 book, "Mondo et Autres Histoires." In French. Opening May 30. (Quad Cinema.)

PORTLAND—Writer-director Niels Arden Oplev's début film follows a pair of brothers, both hoods, through Denmark's underworld. In Danish. Opening May 28. (Film Forum.)

ROUGH MAGIC—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening May 30. (62nd & Broadway and Village East Cinemas.)

'TIL THERE WAS YOU—A romance about a couple (Jeanne Tripplehorn and Dylan McDermott) who have long been destined to meet. Directed by Scott Winant. Written by Winnie Holzman. Opening May 30. (Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, Embassy 4, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

TRIAL AND ERROR—In Jonathan Lynn's courtroom farce, an out-of-work actor (Michael Richards) decides to fill in for his friend, a very drunk attorney (Jeff Daniels). Written by Sara Bernstein and Gregory Bernstein. Opening May 30. (Cinema I, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Sarah Kerr, Anthony Lane, and Terrence Rafferty. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre information is listed on page 29.)

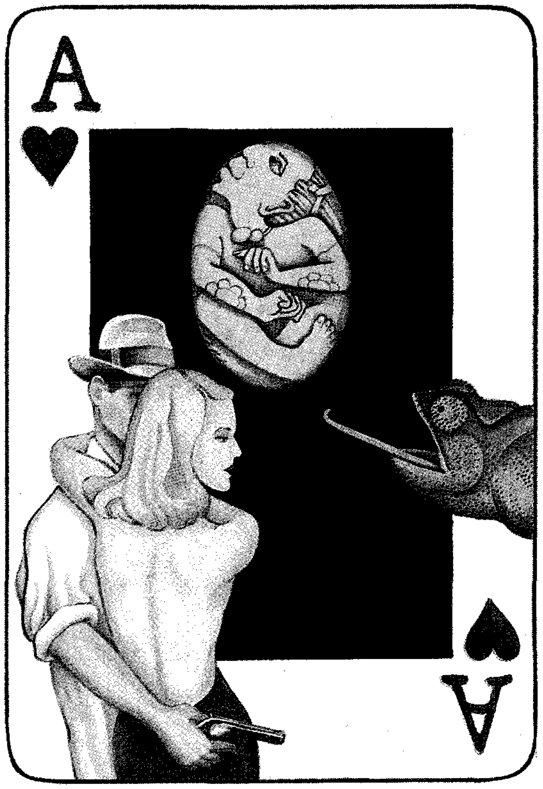
ADDICTED TO LOVE—A romantic comedy about two spurned lovers (Meg Ryan and Matthew Broderick) who team up to win back—or revenge themselves on—the man and the woman (Tcheky Karyo and Kelly Preston) who rejected them. Directed by Griffin Dunne, from Robert Gordon's screenplay. (Coronet Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, State, and Village East Cinemas.)

AUSTIN POWERS: INTERNATIONAL MAN OF MYSTERY—A parody of James Bond films and the swinging London of the sixties. The jokes are hit and miss, but Mike Myers, who plays dual roles (he's the super-sleuth photographer of the title, who's awakened from a cryogenic sleep he entered in 1967, and he's also Dr. Evil) and has upped the ante by writing his own script, delivers every line with a gentle, toothy, hilarious abandon. And Elizabeth Hurley, as the spy who helps Powers make the transition to the nineties, has a fine, dry way of setting up Myers's better jokes. The director is Jay Roach.—B.D. (Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, State, Sutton, and Village Theatre VII.)

BRASSED OFF—Moviegoers who are dragged against their wills to Mark Herman's study of the effect of brass-band music on a depressed mining community in the north of England may be surprised to find themselves having a good time. Pete Postlethwaite stars as Danny, who runs the band with an iron baton; the miners' main reason to stay in it is the arrival of the bewitching Gloria (Tara Fitzgerald), who has a wicked way with a flugelhorn. She starts seeing Andy (Ewan McGregor, without whom no British film is complete these days), who, to his dismay, discovers that she is working for the people who are planning to shut the pit down. The movie, which is full of such clashes, emerges, to Herman's great credit, not as stiff dialectic but as kindly, flexible farce; only toward the end, disastrously, does the political fury burst out into the open. With Stephen Tompkinson and Jim Carter, each as mournful as the other.—A.L. (5/26/97) (Angelika Film Center, Lincoln Square, and New York Twin.)

BREAKDOWN—A well-made if not particularly original highway thriller, starring Kurt Russell as a man whose wife (Kathleen Quinlan) vanishes while they're vacationing in the Southwest. The director, Jonathan Mostow, milks a lot of anxiety out of dusty desert roads and creepy diners, building a fine suspense machine as Russell, in an impressive performance, tracks a menacing trucker (J. T. Walsh) who may be responsible for his wife's disappearance.—B.D. (Astor Plaza, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Waverly.)

BROKEN ENGLISH—A fierce début by a New Zealand director, Gregor Nicholas, about a young



Opening May 30, Russell Crowe and Bridget Fonda in "Rough Magic."

VIRGINIA HATLEY

Croatian woman (Aleksandra Vujcic) who escapes the war in the former Yugoslavia to join the rest of her family in Auckland. Her dedication to sex and booze marks her as a free spirit, but standing firmly in her path is her terrifying father (Rade Serbedzija). The best reason to stay with the picture is Vujcic (this is her début, too): only the depth of her brooding and her chronic urge to break away stop the film from descending into rant.—A.L. (5/12/97) (Guild and Village East Cinemas.)

Chasing Amy—In Kevin Smith's low-budget comedy, a young comic-book artist (Ben Affleck) falls in love with a pretty, vivacious blonde (Joey Lauren Adams), who is, inconveniently, a lesbian. Smith doesn't have the skill to maintain a pleasurable sense of anticipation for an entire movie; this picture, his third, is as crummy-looking and as sluggishly paced as his début feature, the 1994 "Clerks."—T.R. (4/7/97) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea West, Eastside Playhouse, Lincoln Square, and Orpheum VII.)

Children of the Revolution—This odd and fractured black comedy, a first feature from the Australian director Peter Duncan, is, you might say, too original for its own good. A devoted Australian Communist (Judy Davis, funny and fidgety) meets Joseph Stalin (a disastrously vulgar F. Murray Abraham), who in the course of an interesting evening woos her, impregnates her, and dies on her. Their child grows up to cultivate both a mustache and a set of implacable attitudes, which leave us in no doubt about his genetic inheritance. The film is a frenzy of newsreels, stills, slow motion, and mock interviews, although its best moments are, arguably, the quiet, shabby scenes of family life.—A.L. (5/12/97) (Village East Cinemas. . . . ¶ 62nd & Broadway; through May 29.)

The Designated Mourner—David Hare's film records, austerely, the original stage production of an austere play by Wallace Shawn. The main character is a lapsed intellectual named Jack (Mike Nichols), who, in long passages of direct address to the audience, explains the process by which he has transformed himself from an insecure highbrow into an oddly contented lowbrow—how, that is, he has managed to empty his spirit of aspiration and human feeling, and to narrow his expectations to the single, simple animal comfort of survival. The only other speakers are his wife (Miranda Richardson) and her father (David de Keyser), a famous poet who is being persecuted by a repressive government. They're smug, haughty, and self-congratulatory; compared with them, Jack seems refreshingly honest and down to earth. But, despite Nichols's charm and virtuosity, there's never a chance that the audience for this obviously highbrow production might actually be sympathetic with the monstrous Jack. He remains a purely literary creature, and, in the end, fails to disturb the certainties of the liberal, educated viewer.—T.R. (5/19/97) (68th St. Playhouse and Village East Cinemas.)

Diary of a Seducer—The Kierkegaard novel of the same name functions as an aphrodisiac for two Parisian students (Chiara Mastroianni and Melvil Poupaud), in a movie written and directed by Danièle Dubroux. In French. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Fathers' Day—In Ivan Reitman's comedy (a remake of the poky, tolerably entertaining 1983 French farce "Les Compères"), Robin Williams and Billy Crystal join forces to look for a missing teen-age boy (Charlie Hofheimer), each of them believing that the runaway might be his son. The stars work together very gracefully; both obviously enjoy being part of a well-tuned, quietly efficient comedy team. But the humor is fatally compromised by baby-boomer sentimentality about parenthood (and dulled even further by the Perry Comoish languor of Reitman's direction). The movie is so warm and cozy and leisurely that you yearn for Williams and Crystal to stop being so professional and responsible—to do something that might disturb its placid surface. Also with Nastassja Kinski and Julia Louis-Dreyfus. The screenplay is by Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandel.—T.R. (5/19/97) (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

The Fifth Element—Loud, garish sci-fi extravaganza written and directed by Luc Besson. The production design is rich and imaginative, the computer-generated images (courtesy of James Cameron's Digital Domain) are amazing, Jean-Paul Gaultier's costumes are truly fabulous, and Bruce Willis's performance, as a cab driver out to save the world, is a small miracle of calm amidst a visual circus—all to no avail. The story is as trite and stupid as that of "StarGate," which at least played up its campiness with a minimum of hysteria. Besson cranks the screaming and the mayhem to ear-splitting levels.—B.D. (Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)

Flamenco—A documentary-cum-love letter to the wizardly singing, dancing, and guitar playing of the Gypsies of southern Spain. Carlos Saura has gathered dozens of performers and had them do their thing in front of an exquisitely simple white backdrop. He relies on Vittorio Storaro's rich cinematography and, of course, on the inherent passion of the genre to hold our interest, and most of the time they do—though the endless succession of numbers sometimes feels like too much of a good thing.—S.K. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

Grosse Pointe Blank—The screenplay has a high-concept premise: professional hit man goes home to attend his tenth high-school reunion. Both the star, John Cusack, and the

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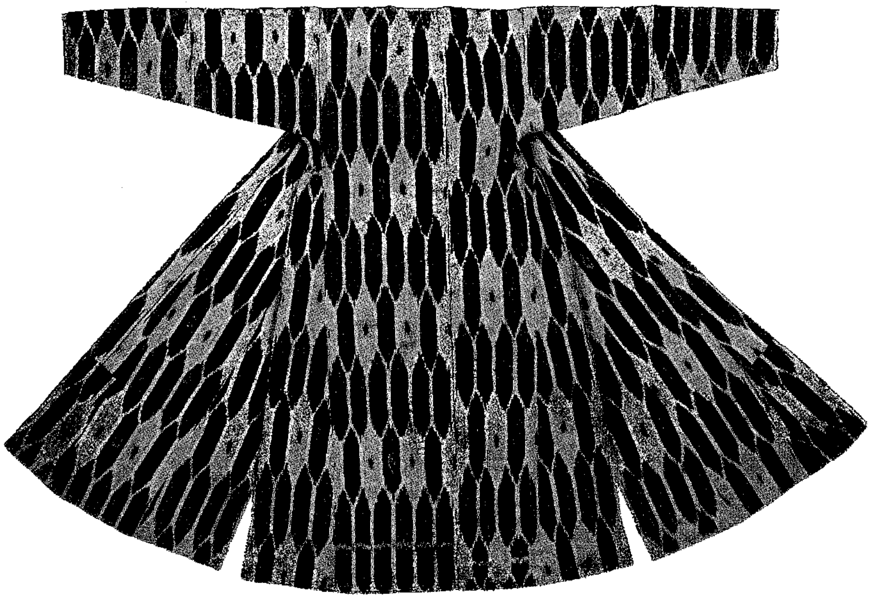

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director, George Armitage, appear to have the sense to play the outrageous material straight, and the opening half hour consists of a series of terrific revue-type sketches; the killer's session with his very reluctant psychiatrist (Alan Arkin) is a classic routine. But gradually the film's poker-faced manner begins to lose its novelty; the picture stalls, and then starts to coast downhill, apparently unaware that the motor has stopped running. Also with Minnie Driver, Dan Aykroyd, Joan Cusack, Jeremy Piven, and Hank Azaria.—T.R. (4/21/97) (86th Street East Twin, Embassy 2, Sutton, and Village Theatre VII.)

IRMA VEP—Olivier Assayas has a good time with the pretensions of French cinema in this mostly charming lampoon of filmmaking. The plot concerns a troubled director (Jean-Pierre Léaud) whose insistence on casting the Hong Kong superstar Maggie Cheung (playing herself) in his remake of the classic French silent "Les Vampires" brings him close to ruin. Assayas dramatizes life on a movie set with some nicely drawn minor characters. Echoes of French films run rampant; the cinematic tricks (handheld cameras, odd sound effects, and so forth) don't always work, but there's some fun to be had here. In French and English.—B.D. (Film Forum 3.)

THE LOST WORLD: JURASSIC PARK—Two groups invade an island of contemporary dinosaurs, one (led by Jeff Goldblum) hoping to study them, the other (led by Arliss Howard and Pete Postlethwaite) out to exploit them, in an adventure directed by Steven Spielberg. Screenplay by David Koepp, based on Michael Crichton's novel. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Olympia, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th Street Showplace, and Ziegfeld.)

LOVE! VALOUR! COMPASSION!—Equal-opportunity mawkishness. Joe Mantello's film version of the 1994 Terrence McNally play—he also directed Off Broadway—hangs onto the Neil Simonesque structure of a group of gay men spending three summer weekends together at a country house. The group includes a couple of pious yuppies (Stephen Spinella and John Benjamin Hickey), an English meanie (John Glover), a stereotypical Broadway-loving queen (Jason Alexander, surprisingly sympathetic), and a Latin hunk (Randy Becker, who demonstrates that you don't have to be a woman to be reduced to an object of lust).—S.K. (Cinema II, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.)

NIGHT FALLS ON MANHATTAN—Yet another movie about New York City police corruption by Sidney Lumet ("Serpico," "Prince of the City," "Q & A"). This one, starring Andy Garcia as a Manhattan D.A. prosecuting a drug king accused of shooting some cops, has the reliable Lumet touches (the blue-and-gray color schemes, the passionate shouting about right and wrong), but it really belongs in a TV line-up. Lumet began his career, in the fifties, as a director of hard-hitting teleplays, and after years of Hollywood moviemaking he appears to have come full circle: the picture is idealistic and moralistic and at the same time hip and cynical, like a good episode of "Law and Order" or "NYPD Blue," only with more cursing.—B.D. (Chelsea West, East 85th Street, Lincoln Square, 72nd Street East, State, 34th St. East, and Waverly.)

PONETTE—Writer-director Jacques Doillon's story of a four-year-old (Victoire Thivisol) who must come to terms with the sudden death of her mother. In French. (Angelika Film Center, Carnegie Hall Cinemas, and Cinema 3rd Avenue.)

LA PROMESSE—Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne's hard-hitting coming-of-age story stars Jérémie Rénier as Igor, a streetwise Belgian teen-ager who helps his scummy father (Olivier Gourmet) traffic in illegal immigrants. The film starts out as a fascinating if detached cinéma vérité look at these lowlifes; we learn how they trump up the paperwork, cheat the immigrants, and force them to work as slave labor. Then, about a third of the way through, Igor sees one of his father's hapless African victims fall off a ladder. He promises to protect the dying man's wife and child, and his struggle to uphold his pledge turns into a morality tale permeated with a Dickensian indignation at evil. A risk-taking, original piece of work. In French.—S.K. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

ROMY AND MICHELE'S HIGH SCHOOL REUNION—Two ditzes (Mira Sorvino and Lisa Kudrow), best friends since childhood, go to their tenth-year high-school reunion determined to prove that they're no longer losers. It's easy to see why someone thought an idiot buddy movie with girls was a fresh idea, but, while the stars are intensely likable, the writing isn't clever enough or daringly stupid enough to produce big laughs. Directed by David Mirkin.—S.K. (86th Street East Twin, Embassy 1, Gotham Cinema, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

SPRUNG—A comedy about a true love whose course does not run smooth, starring Rusty Cundieff (who also directed) and Joe Torry as guys on the make, and Tisha Campbell and Paula Jai Parker as the women they set their sights on. (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Manhattan Twin, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)

THE VAN—Adapted by Roddy Doyle from the third novel in his Barrytown Trilogy, this tale of Dublin no-hopers also marks the lonely and melancholic end of the trilogy in the movies. After the joyousness of "The Commitments" and the dirty fun of "The Snapper," the final act is a letdown. Colm Meaney stars as a paunchy idler who joins forces with his friend Bimbo (Donal O'Kelly) to run a new kind of fast-food service: mobile, friendly, frantic, and profoundly unhealthy. Stephen Frears, who directed, works equally hard to serve up the energy and farce of their enterprise, but finally even he is sapped by the plotless pathos of the tale. Though as usual Doyle sets off a display of loud jokes, for once they seem dampened

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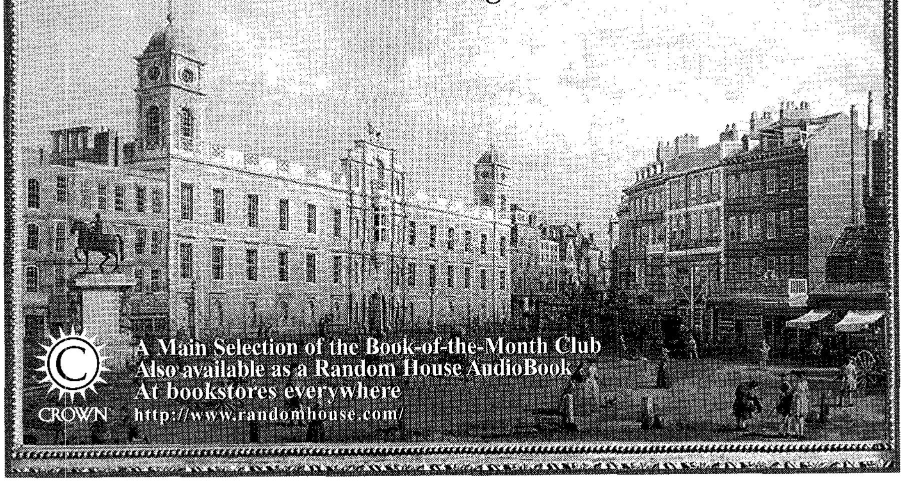

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by something close to sentimentality. Music by Eric Clapton; food, at a guess, by the people who made "Swamp Thing."—A.L. (5/26/97) (Angelika Film Center and Regency. . . . ¶ Cinema I; through May 29.)

ALSO PLAYING

ABSOLUTE POWER: Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **ALL OVER ME:** Angelika Film Center. . . . **BOOTY CALL:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **A CHEF IN LOVE:** Carnegie Hall Cinemas. . . . **THE DAYTRIPPERS** (reviewed in our issue of 3/24/97): Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Village East Cinemas. . . . **THE ENGLISH PATIENT** (11/25/96): Embassy 3 and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **JERRY MAGUIRE** (12/16/96): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **KAMA SUTRA:** Angelika 57. . . . **KOLYA:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and The Screening Room. . . . **LIAR LIAR** (3/31/97): First & 62nd Cinemas and National Twin. . . . **LOST HIGHWAY** (3/10/97): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **RETURN OF THE JEDI:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE SAINT** (4/14/97): State. . . . **SLING BLADE:** Manhattan Twin. . . . **VOLCANO:** 86th Street East Twin, Lincoln Square, and National Twin. . . . **WAITING FOR GUFFMAN:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **WHEN WE WERE KINGS** (2/17/97): 59th Street East Cinema and The Screening Room.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th St.
Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Carnegie Hall Cinemas, Seventh Ave. between 56th and 57th Sts.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Embassy 1, Broadway at 46th St.
Embassy 2, 3, and 4, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Manhattan Twin, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
National Twin, Broadway at 44th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
68th St. Playhouse, Third Ave. at 68th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th St. East, 241 E. 34th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

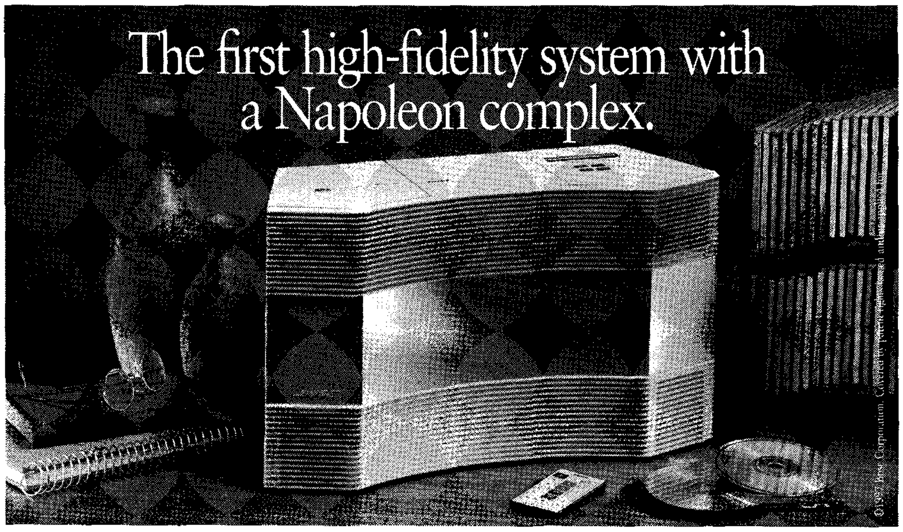
As You Like It (1936)—Shakespeare cleaned up and made rather too respectably lighthearted. Still, this British production is by no means contemptible; it's enjoyable even in its disappointing moments. As Rosalind, Elisabeth Bergner, a great theatrical technician who specialized in heartbreaking gamine charm, can't resist being more adorably mischievous than is necessary, and she's handicapped by her age (she was close to forty) and by her German accent. The young Laurence Olivier is triumphantly angelic as that amorous, brooding goof Orlando; there's a real interpretation at work here—his reactions make one grin. Directed by Bergner's husband, Paul Czinner.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; June 3.)

The Criminal Code (1931)—A minor Howard Hawks picture about the clash between the legal code upheld by a savvy D.A. turned warden (Walter Huston) and the code of the street and the cellblock. It starts nimbly, thanks to the overlapping dialogue and beautifully efficient staging that would soon become Hawks trademarks; then the theatre-derived plot, about the plight of an accidental killer (Phillips Holmes), cuts off the options for inventiveness, at least until a third-act prison murder. Still, Huston brings a dry, rueful vivacity to his role, squeezing multiple meanings out of his oft-repeated "Yeah"; Boris Karloff boasts a menacing charisma as a convict who always keeps his word; and bit players, like an unbilled Andy Devine, deliver pungent punctuation. Fred Niblo, Jr., and Seton I. Miller adapted Martin Flavin's play. Teddy Tetzlaff and James How (James Wong Howe) did the cinematography.—M.S. (Museum of Modern Art; May 30 and June 2.)

Henry V (1944)—Laurence Olivier once said that Shakespeare's Henry V was the sort of juvenile role that you can't play when you're a juvenile—"When you are young, you are too bashful to play a hero; you debunk it. It isn't until you're older that you can understand the pictorial beauty of heroism." He came to it at the right time. His production—it was his first time out as a film director—is a triumph of color, music, spectacle, and soaring heroic poetry, and, as actor, he brings lungs, exultation, and a guileful wit to the role. The film has true charm.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; June 3.)

The Marriage of Maria Braun (1978)—Rainer Werner Fassbinder joins Bertolt Brecht to "Blonde Venus" in a melodramatic concoction that pretends to social criticism. Hanna Schygulla has the title role: part harlot, part proto-feminist, and part stand-by-your-man heroine who will stay emotionally committed to her husband, an S.S. officer, no matter how long it takes him to return from the Russian front (and, later, from prison). The story of a spunky dame who turns gold-digger and murderer yet keeps faith with her spouse is nearly as old as the movies, but Fassbinder tacks on two Konrad Adenauer radio broadcasts and some climactic photographs of him and succeeding German chancellors to suggest that Maria's progress mirrors that of postwar Germany; "This is a bad time for emotions," Maria says, as though she's reading a mood chart of history. The best way to enjoy the film is to ignore the soapy ironies and revel in the vitality of Schygulla, who is, in quick turns, all business, all devotion, or all lust. In German.—M.S. (Walter Reade Theatre; May 29-31.)

Meet John Doe (1941)—An odd, socially conscious picture, directed by Frank Capra and starring Gary Cooper and Barbara Stanwyck, about a man who tries to commit suicide in order to call attention to a right-wing plot.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Rain or Shine (1930)—Joe Cook plays a circus manager who tries to keep putting on two shows a day, "rain or shine," for the pretty equestrienne (Louise Fazenda) who owns the operation, despite bill collectors, disloyal performers, and the owner's love for another man. If you can tolerate Fazenda's simpy acting and Cook's endless wise-guy antics (his specialty is a smokescreen of non sequiturs), the movie offers a glimpse into the Dickensian confusions of the director, Frank Capra: it pillories rich people, law enforcers, two-faced provocateurs, and performers who won't work without pay, while celebrating the circus as a family whose members occasionally pick pockets. Dorothy Howell and Jo Swerling adapted the play by James Gleason and Maurice Marks. Cinematography by Joseph Walker. With William (Buster) Collier, Jr., and Dave Chasen.—M.S. (Film Forum 2; May 28.)

Red River (1948)—A magnificent horse opera about a mid-nineteenth-century first cattle drive up the Chisholm Trail. The director, Howard Hawks, structures the drive as an exciting series of stampedes, Indian battles, and gunfights, with a ferocious climax in the fight between the two principals—John Wayne, as the father, and Montgomery Clift, as the adopted son. A lot of it is just terrible, but Clift—in his most aggressively sexual screen performance—is angular and tense and audacious, and the other actors brawl amusingly in the strong-silent-man tradition. Russell Harlan's photography makes the rolling plains the true hero; the setting has epic grandeur. The cast includes Walter Brennan, Harry Carey, Coleen Gray, John Ireland, and frantic Joanne Dru, who acts as if the Old West were Greenwich Village. Music by Dmitri Tiomkin.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; June 1.)

Scarface (1932)—The gangster classic, with Paul Muni as the dangerous hood with the scar on his cheek, and dark, huge-eyed Ann Dvorak as his sister. The writer, Ben Hecht, and the director, Howard Hawks, said that they wrote the story by treating the Capone family "as if they were the Borgias set down in Chicago." Overall, it's a terrific movie, even though the pacing doesn't always seem quite right. The film's violence has the crazy, helter-skelter feeling of actual gun battles, and Paul Muni, with a machine gun in his arms, is brutal and grotesque, in a primal, childlike, fixating way. The cast includes George Raft, Osgood Perkins, Karen Morley, and Boris Karloff.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; May 29.)

Sid & Nancy (1986)—It starts on Friday, the thirteenth of October, 1978, with the police arresting Sid Vicious (Gary Oldman), the bass player of the pioneering British punk band the Sex Pistols, for the murder of his American lover, Nancy Spungen (Chloe Webb), at the Chelsea Hotel, in Manhattan. Then it cuts back to Sid's boot bashing through the windshield of a Rolls-Royce—an act that epitomizes the explosive nihilism of frustrated youth in mid-seventies England. The director, Alex Cox, who co-wrote the script with Abbe Wool, rarely digs any deeper into the anger and energy of punk; he's intent on showing how the Sex Pistols were marketed and corrupted, how Sid was left reeling by celebrity (and by the need to be nasty on cue), and how he and Nancy retreated into love and junk. Oldman and Webb can be chillingly funny and sad, but this downbeat docudrama smacks of gutter sentimentality: compared to the people around them, Sid and Nancy come off as debauched innocents. Roger Deakins did the edgy cinematography.—M.S. (Anthology Fim Archives; starting May 30.)

Tiger Shark (1932)—The material of this brisk (eighty-minute) Howard Hawks melodrama is naïve and far from virgin-new, but the movie is freshly and powerfully directed, and the tired plot is filled out by surprisingly exciting footage of tuna fishing in the Pacific. Edward G. Robinson gives a shrewd, energetic performance as a Portuguese captain of a tuna boat; the beautiful, sullen, dark-eyed Zita Johann is his wife, and his best friend (Richard Arlen) is, inevitably, in love with her.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; May 30.)

At MOMA and The Screening Room, films made by women directors.

ELIZA GRAN

Tramp, Tramp, Tramp (1926)—Harry Langdon's first full-length comedy. Not quite the picture that his second, "The Strong Man," is, but the restrained slapstick is charming. In this one, he enters a footrace across the continent and gets caught in a chain gang and a cyclone before winning. Harry Edwards directed, with Frank Capra on the script. With Joan Crawford. Silent.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; June 2.)

Why We Fight: War Comes to America (1945)—In this series wrap-up, Frank Capra contrasts the overseas catastrophes depicted in his six earlier "Why We Fight" documentaries with the slow-to-wake conscience of the American public. Shrewd propaganda, but the stars of the film seem to be the fluctuating numbers of the Gallup poll.—M.S. (Film Forum 2; June 3.)

LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—A retrospective of films directed by Frank Capra. May 28: "Rain or Shine" (†) and "Power of the Press" (1928; silent). . . . May 29-30: "Meet John Doe" (†) and "State of the Union" (1948). . . . May 31-June 1: "You Can't Take It with You" (1938) and "Arsenic and Old Lace" (1944). . . . June 2: "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp" (†) and three two-reelers starring Harry Langdon. . . . June 3: "Why We Fight: War Comes to America" (†), "The Negro Soldier" (1944), and "Hitler Lives!" (1945).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A program of films directed by Howard Hawks. May 29 at 2:30: "Fazil" (1928; silent). . . . May 29 at 6: "Scarface" (†). . . . May 29 at 8 and June 1 at 5: "His Girl Friday" (1940). . . . May 30 at 2:30 and June 2 at 6: "The Criminal Code" (†). . . . May 30 at 6 and June 2 at 2:30: "Paid to Love" (1927; silent). . . . May 30 at 8: "Tiger Shark" (†). . . . May 31 at 2: "Rio Bravo" (1959). . . . May 31 at 5: "El Dorado" (1967). . . . June 1 at 2: "Red River" (†). . . . June 3 at 2:30: "The Big Sleep" (1945). . . . ¶ May 29 at 3 and 6: "People and the Land" (1996, Riad Bahhur and Tom Hayes). . . . ¶ A program of films celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the distribution company Women Make Movies. May 30 at 3 and June 1 at 2:30: "Halving the Bones" (1995, Ruth Ozeka Lounsbury). . . . May 30 at 6 and June 2 at 3: "Girls Like Us" (1996, Jane C. Wagner and Tina DiFeliciantonio). . . . May 30 at 8 and June 1 at 6: "Shinjuku Bos" (1995, Kim Longinotto and Jano Williams). . . . May 31 at 2:30: "The Lost Garden: The Life and Cinema of Alice-Guy Blanché" (1995, Marquise Lepage). . . . May 31 at 5: "Which Way Is East?" (1994, Lynne Sachs) and "Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter" (1994, Deborah Hoffmann). . . . June 2 at 6: "DiAna's Hair Ego: AIDS Info Up Front" (1990, Ellen Spiro) and "Knowing Her Place" (1990, Indu Krishnan). . . . ¶ June 3 at 3: "Henry V" (†). . . . ¶ June 3 at 6: "The Rise of Louis XIV" (1968, Roberto Rossellini). . . . ¶ June 3 at 6: "As You Like It" (†).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Films directed by Rainer Werner Fassbinder. May 28 at 2 and 6:15: "Beware of a Holy Whore" (1970). . . . May 28 at 4:15 and 8:15: "Gods of the Plague" (1969). . . . May 29 at 2 and May 30 at 4:15 and 9: "Mother Küsters Goes to Heaven" (1975). . . . May 29 at 4:15, May 30 at 2 and 6:30, and May 31 at 6:15: "The Marriage of Maria Braun" (†). . . . May 31 at 4 and 8:45 and June 1 at 2 and 6:30: "The Third Generation" (1979). . . . June 1 at 4:15, June 2 at 4:15 and 8:45, and June 3 at 2: "The Stationmaster's Wife" (1978). . . . June 1 at 8:30, June 2 at 2 and 6:30, and June 3 at 4: "Lili Marlene" (1980).

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—June 3 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Window Shopping" (1983, Chantal Akerman; in French).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—A program of films directed by Peter Greenaway. May 31 at 2: "Prospero's Books" (1991). . . . May 31 at 4:30: "Four American Composers: John Cage and Meredith Monk" (1993). . . . June 1 at 2: "The Belly of an Architect" (1987). . . . June 1 at 4: "Four American Composers: Philip Glass and Robert Ashley" (1983).

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (864-5400)—A series of musical films, each preceded by a short cabaret performance featuring the music of the film's composer and lyricist. June 3 at 7:30: Carolee Carmello will sing songs by Jule Styne, Betty Comden, and Adolph Green, followed by a screening of "Bells Are Ringing" (1960, Vincente Minnelli).

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363)—From May 30: "The Harder They Come" (1973, Perry Henzell), with Jimmy Cliff.

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—May 28-29 at 8: "L'Atalante" (1934, Jean Vigo; in French). . . . May 30-31 and June 1 at 6, June 2 at 9, and June 3 at 6: "The American Friend" (1977, Wim Wenders; in German). . . . May 30 at 8:20, May 31-June 1 at 4 and 8:20, and June 2-3 at 8:20: "Chronicle of a Disappearance" (1996, Elia Suleiman; in Arabic). . . . May 30-31 and June 1-3 at 10:15: "Sid & Nancy" (†).

The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (465-3435)—May 30-June 1: Films by women filmmakers.

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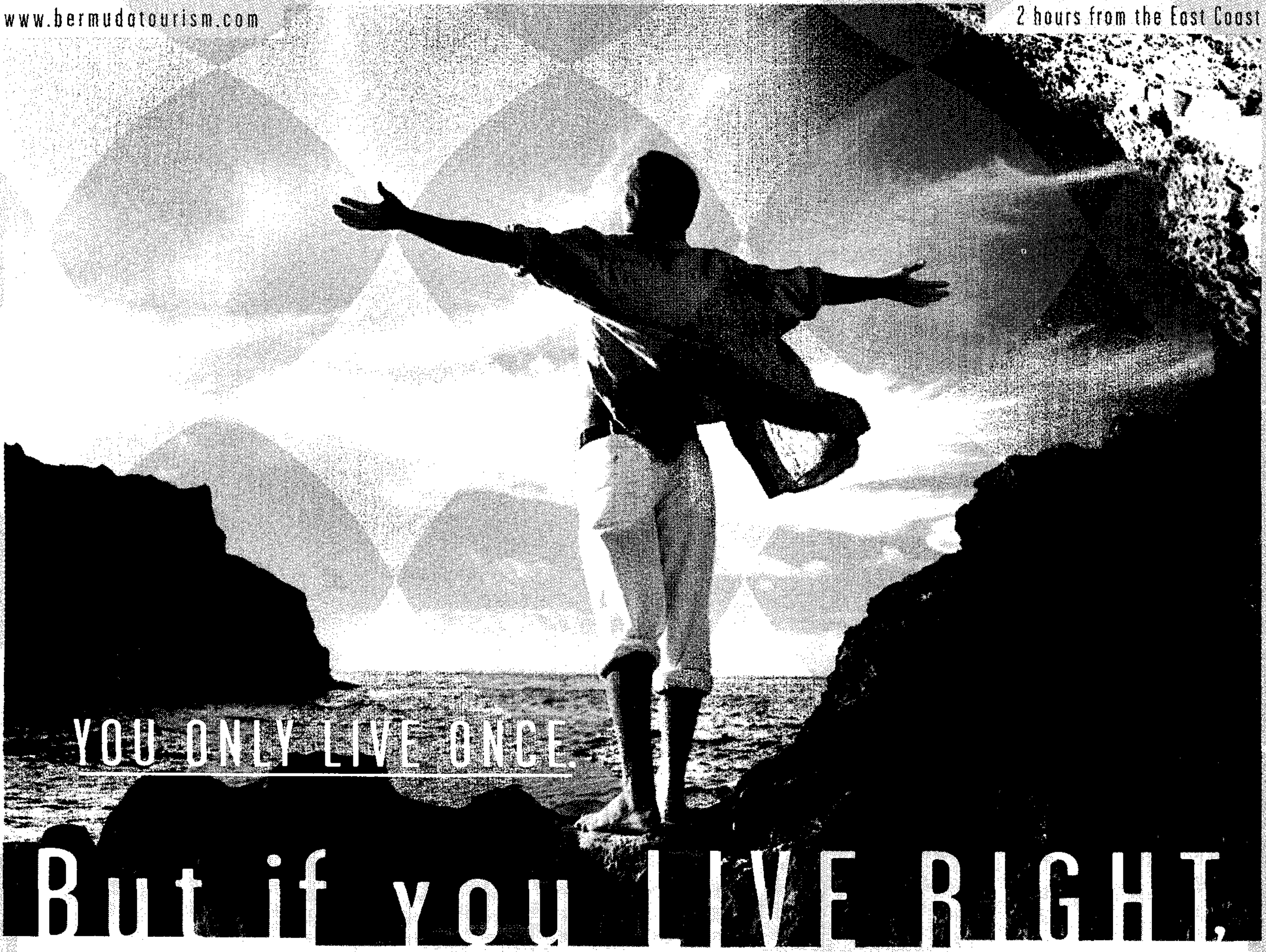
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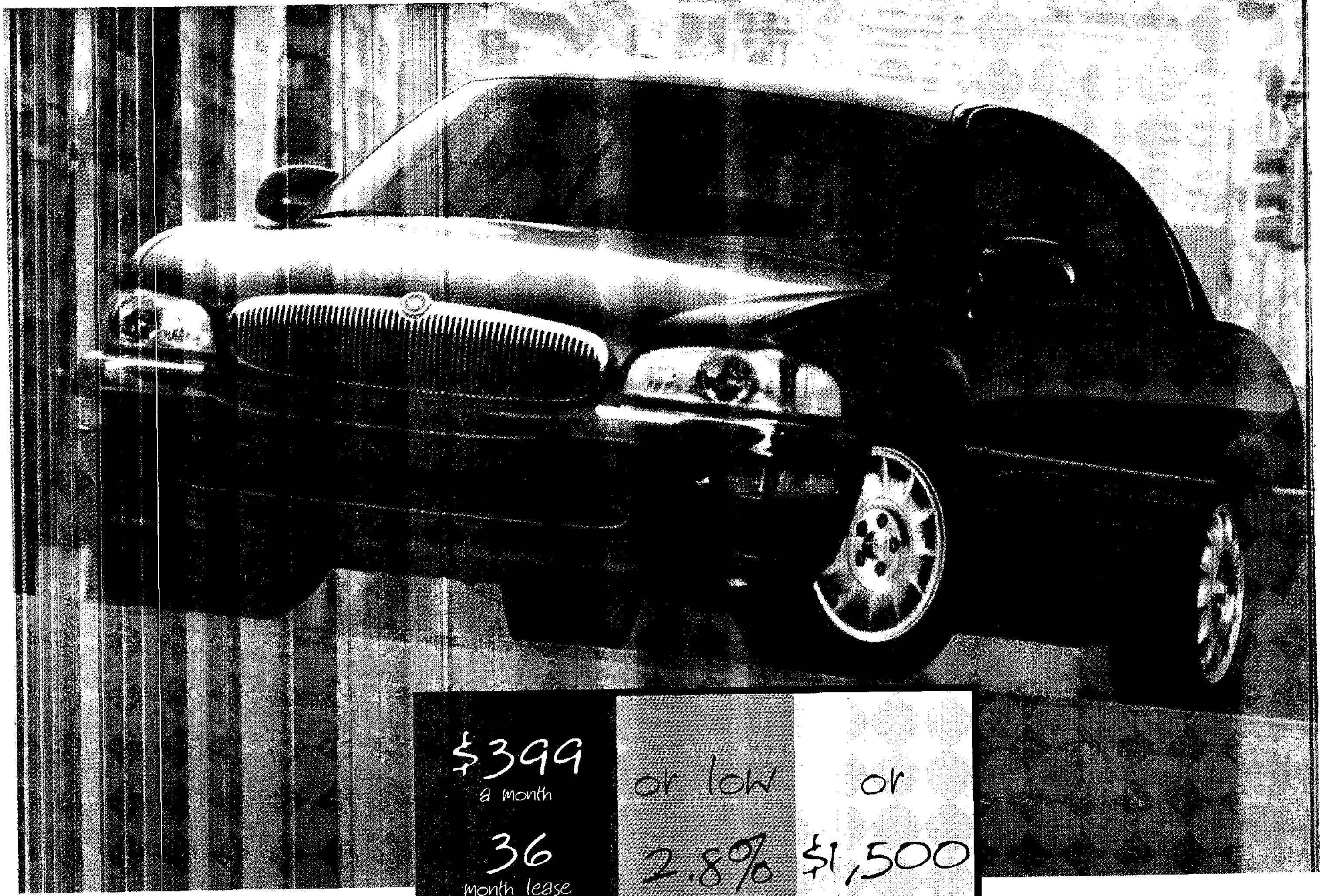

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THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

NERD FILE

Can Bill Gates's version of audience participation make you more creative?

ONE of the problems facing people who are trying to create interactive entertainment these days is that never in the history of human civilization has there been a successful form of interactive entertainment. When the actors walk through the aisles at a performance of "Godspell," don't most people feel like shooting them?

But, what with the Web, all man's previous endeavors are basically irrelevant, and now the on-line Microsoft Network is trying to foster a new relationship between content providers and providees. It will work like this: Toward the end of June, four novelists will each submit the first paragraph or so of a story to an MSN site, four social commentators will submit the beginning of an essay, and four artists will submit a sketch. The network's subscribers will vote on which one in each category they prefer, and the professionals will then send in a new contribution or sketch that will be a continuation of the winning choice in their category. The process will be repeated twice a week for thirteen weeks, resulting in three complete works. The fiction writers expected to participate are Michael Chabon, Mark Leyner, Jay McInerney, and Maggie Estep; the probable commentators are Christopher Buckley, Spalding Gray, Arianna Huffington, and Sandra Tsing Loh; and the artists are Istvan Banyai, Juliette Borda, Paul Davis, and Scott Menchin.

Asked about the venture, Jay McInerney said he was amused by it but he did not expect novelists to disappear. "It's my one chance to shave off a slice of those Microsoft billions," he added. The pay is a thousand dollars a week, or around five dollars a word for the writers. That's not bad—until you consider that when Bill Gates bought the sixteenth-century notebook of Leonardo da Vinci's known as the Leicester Codex, he paid $30.8 million, or roughly five hundred and sixty dollars a word. Spalding Gray hasn't fully entered into the spirit of the thing. He had understood that the format would be different than it is. When the real one was described to him, he said that while he liked the idea of collaborating with the other writers, "it's not high on my agenda to have a bunch of anonymous people voting on something I've written." He also foresees a practical problem. "I don't have access to a computer or screen of any kind," he said. "I don't have a fax. I'm trying to figure out how they think they'll send the paragraphs to me."

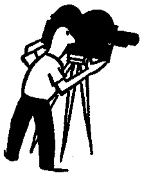
ILLUSTRATIONS BY MICHAEL WITTE

Liz Dubelman, one of the Web site's creators, talked about her inspiration in a recent telephone conversation: "I had read an article about some five-year-old kids who had been given crayons to draw with. Some of them drew really well, but some didn't, and looking at what the other kids did they felt bad. But then the crayons were taken away and they were all given rubber stamps to work with. Then everyone was able to create something. They were able to feel creative about it, without it being creative. So in the same way I thought the audience could feel they were creating something."

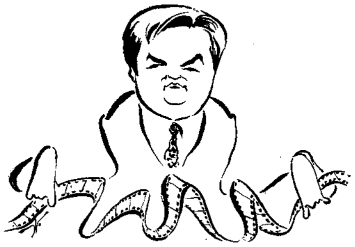
If audiences do have that response, Microsoft's experiment may represent a tectonic shift in our culture. Historically, in order to feel creative without actually being creative you have had to eat snails or watch Fassbinder movies or vastly overpay for an apartment in the East Village. These are painful experiences. MSN will give you the chance to feel creative with the click of a mouse, at a great reduction of suffering. Say this for the Web, it just may eliminate escargots. —JAMES COLLINS

THE PICTURES

Bosnia's Muslim prime minister longs to be in development hell.



HARIS SILAJDZIC, the fifty-one-year-old Bosnian Muslim who is co-prime minister of Bosnia-Herzegovina, has a movie to pitch. He had some other chores to take care of when he was in the United States last week—a meeting with Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright, a speech on religious tolerance to an audience at the Park Avenue Synagogue that included Ambassador-that-was Richard Holbrooke and Ambassador-that-probably-will-be Felix Rohatyn—but the main thing was the movie. The film he wants to make is about his homeland, and it is a love story. "There are a lot of Romeos and Juliets in Bosnia," he said.



"I like movies," the Prime Minister said, puffing on a cigar in the library of the Regency Hotel. "And nobody reads books. I want the largest audience to keep seeing Bosnia. If this crisis can happen in Bosnia, it can happen anywhere."

Built like a welterweight boxer, with sharp cheekbones and a cowlick of brown hair, Silajdzic is a heartthrob back home. He earned his political scars the hard way, serving as the sole prime minister during the most intense years of conflict in the Balkans, from 1993 until February, 1996.

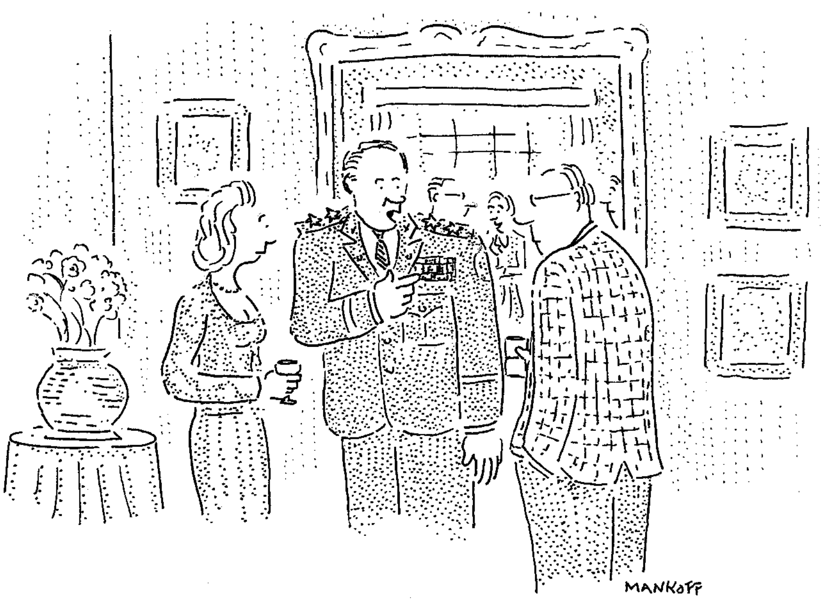
The Prime Minister isn't interested in some earnest little documentary. "I want a big movie," said Silajdzic, who plans to hold out for an executive-producer credit. "If we tell a good story about Bosnia, people will sit even for three hours."

Silajdzic is thinking epic, Cecil B. De Mille style. He wants us to see Bosnia as a home to refugees since the Inquisition, a place where love gets tested. His movie covers five hundred years. "It begins with the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492 and their arrival in Bosnia," he said. "I can see the scene. I can hear the Bosnian folk music. The ships with the Jewish refugees heading for Bosnia will cross paths with Columbus's ships on their way to discover America."

Cut to a half millennium later, to a scene in which Silajdzic's current ambassador to the United States, a descendant of those Spanish Jews, meets with the American President and "pleads to help end the genocide in Bosnia."

Fluent in English, French, and Arabic, Silajdzic is still not so sure how to speak Hollywood. He has written a three-page treatment, but it has the unsnappy title "The Exodus: A brief elaboration of an idea." A scholar of Islamic history, he has written short stories and poetry, but he has never written a movie. He knows he needs help. He recently took a long meeting in Sarajevo with Branko Lustig, a Croatian-born Holocaust survivor, who produced "Schindler's List." The meeting was friendly, if not terribly successful. "If I go to Spielberg," Lustig told Silajdzic, "I must tell him the story in three words. If I tell him it starts in 1492 and ends now, he will think I'm crazy."

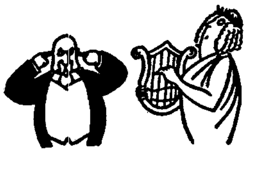
The Prime Minister isn't worried—at least not about the viability of his movie project. "I hear there are sharks in Hollywood," he whispered, leaning forward. "Do you think they'll steal my idea?" —DANIEL VOLL



"And this one is for being faithful to my wife."

THE MUSICAL LIFE

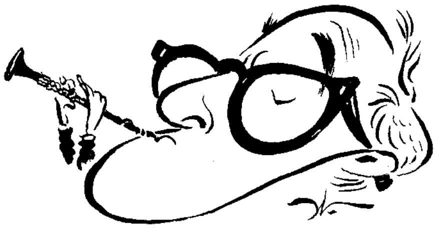
Woody Allen brings the flannel-shirt-and-chinos look to the Carlyle.



The Café Carlyle, its *ancien* Vertès murals and elegant air intact, is jumping. Bobby Short is back for two months, and Woody Allen, of all people, has taken over in the café on Mondays. Short, long accompanied by just bass and drums, has brought a tuxedoed eight-piece band made up of three reeds (seated to his right), three brass (seated to his left), and flanking bass and drums, and Allen has brought his come-as-you-are, seven-piece New Orleans band (trumpet, clarinet, trombone, piano, banjo, bass, and drums).

Short, a tireless Ellingtonphile, has been edging steadily away from his jolly, shouting Cole Porter mode to being a kind of jazz singer who likes to perform slow, late-night, husky-voiced versions of "I Can't Get Started" and "Body and Soul." (He has long been a good, eccentric jazz pianist.) On opening night at the Carlyle, early in May, the band played big-band-type organ chords behind him on half of his eighteen numbers; and on such slow numbers as "Love Is Here to Stay" the tenor saxophonist Loren Schoenberg fashioned lovely obbligatos around him. Short's singing was intense, laid-back, and moving. (But, no-win: a glacéed Carlyle lady with just-so short hair and a patrician nose said as she was leaving, "I don't think I like this jazz of Bobby's.")

Woody Allen and his band famously appeared at Michael's Pub starting in 1971. They invariably drew S.R.O. crowds that came principally to ogle Allen. But what they found was not Woody the very private celebrity but Woody the very private New Orleans clarinettist, seated in the midst of his band, his face expressionless, his shoulders hunched, his legs crossed, and his clarinet pointed at the floor, a player who, lost in his music, vanishes before the applause dies at the end of the single set he does each week. The overflow audience at a recent Carlyle show was about a third Carlyle regulars, a third F.O.W. (Peter Bogdanovich and his wife among them), and a third Woody gazers, tieless and, like their man, in sports shirts.



Allen talked the other day about his new venue and about playing the clarinet: "I still try and practice at least an hour a day, and have for forty years. I know there's a lid on my playing, that I'm never going to get beyond that lid, that I'm going to sound pretty much the same forever. But playing this old primitive music is an essential of my life.

"The Carlyle is certainly different, and we're both feeling our way, the club and us," he continued. "I'm used to playing in a brightly lit place with more of a sense of pandemonium, with people from Des Moines and Brazil and Italy. The Carlyle is very sweet, very nice, a dignified, reserved place. At the end of our set on our first night, a distinguished-looking gray-haired gentleman got up and said, 'I very much appreciated your concert. Thank you.' " —WHITNEY BALLIETT

ASKING AROUND

Did the Knicks get justice or did they just get the shaft? Bigdomes speak out.

New York Knick fans will go to their grave believing that the National Basketball Association robbed the Knicks of the chance to win the playoffs when it suspended five star players for one game each. Fandom is, of course, wildly irrational, and last week the *Times* declared in a solemn editorial that the Knicks had in fact "robbed themselves" when their players left the bench while a brawl was going on beneath the basket. Since the rule prohibiting such conduct is supposed to be applied "automatically," the *Times* reasoned, any exception would undermine discipline. By this logic, Patrick Ewing—the Knicks' high-scoring center, who is a good citizen and a noble competitor—deserved to be punished, even though he plainly meant no harm and hardly got within twenty feet of the melee. But is that so? For more on this, let's go to the philosophers:

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William N. Eskridge, Jr., specialist in legislation and statutory interpretation at Georgetown law school: "There are three different values that are always involved when you interpret a directive text. The first is the value of following to the letter the plain meaning of the statute. That's probably the most important value, because language provides the greatest possibility of consensus. The second value is the expectation of the governing body. What is the goal or purpose of the directive? Ewing and the Knicks argued that expelling him from the game was not consistent with the purpose, since he did not leave intending to add fuel to the fire. And if the goal of the directive was to maintain peace on the court, they have a good purpose argument. The third value is that there are usually larger normative considerations at work when you interpret directive arrangements. Basketball wants to send out a clear message: 'We are not hockey.' So what would drive my vote is that the risk I fear in this particular case is a risk of under-enforcement."

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Martin Marty, University of Chicago religion professor and director of The Public Religion Project: "The theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer used the phrase 'cheap grace,' which referred to transgressions which are too easily forgiven. But you don't want to put everything in absolutes. We all do that all the time. You tell your kid you're going to ground him if he wears an earring; then he does, but in the end you don't do anything, because you don't feel like the act merits the punishment. It's not just a matter of justice but of mutuality, commonality. In 'Fear and Trembling,' Kierkegaard talks about 'the teleological suspension of the ethical.' At times the rules of ethics are suspended so that the moral order can keep going on. Of course in this case we're not talking about something transcendent; but you can also say that the moral order can be nickel-and-dimed to death if you enforce every little thing."

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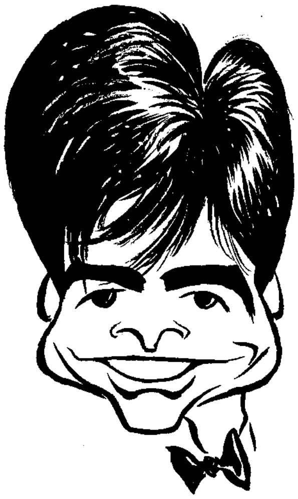
Ronald Dworkin, professor of law and of philosophy at Oxford and New York Universities: "My first reaction was that this was a miscarriage of justice. I read a columnist who said, 'You have to enforce the law in its strictest terms.' And I thought, We don't do that in the courts; why should we do it in basketball? There's a famous old New York Court of Appeals case, Riggs v. Palmer, in which a man named Elmer learned that he had been designated the heir under his grandfather's will, and so he murdered the grandfather in order to collect the inheritance. The question was, Does he still inherit? One of the judges said, 'You have to read the statute of wills to see just what it says.' But the other judges said that any rule has got to be interpreted against the background of some general moral principles, one of which was that people can't profit through their own deliberate wrong. I'd take the same attitude in this case. You don't punish people for acts that not only don't cause harm, but aren't even of the kind to cause the harm that the statute was designed to prevent. Suppose Ewing saw somebody pulling a knife in the middle of a fray and he leapt off the bench and jumped on this person to try to prevent harm? It would be inconceivable in a case like that that you would interpret the law literally." —James Traub

FAX FROM LONDON

Brit birds rate cute guy, liken ex-Clinton aide to stuffed animal.

The thinking-woman's-dream-date aura that surrounds George Stephanopoulos in his native land takes a slightly less potent form in London. British sex symbols are generally either rockers or royals, who tend to be bony and scruffy. George is more on the cute and cuddly end of the spectrum.

During the recent political campaign, the former top aide to President Clinton was the subject of a popular dinner-party game, "Spot the Stephanopoulos," in which players tried to identify traces of Georgian spin in the rhetoric of Tony Blair, whom he was rumored to be secretly advising. Postelection attention wandered, but recently Stephanopoulsighting enjoyed a renaissance, as George was in town to give the keynote address at the Institute of Public Relations Sword of Excellence gala awards dinner.



One blonde wearing a tight apple-green halter-necked dress scoped out the room. "Where is he?" she asked. During dinner, the George search went from table to table, like a round of Telephone: "He's there." "No, he's there." "Is he really here?" After George delivered his address—a brief take on Labour's first week in power ("nearly perfect") versus his own ("nearly disastrous")—one formerly unconvinced young woman sighed, "Oh, he's a Teddy bear." Owing to a backlit sword (the Public Relations Sword of Excellence itself, no doubt), which was mounted on the wall just behind the podium, he looked like a Teddy bear on a spit. —Vanessa Friedman

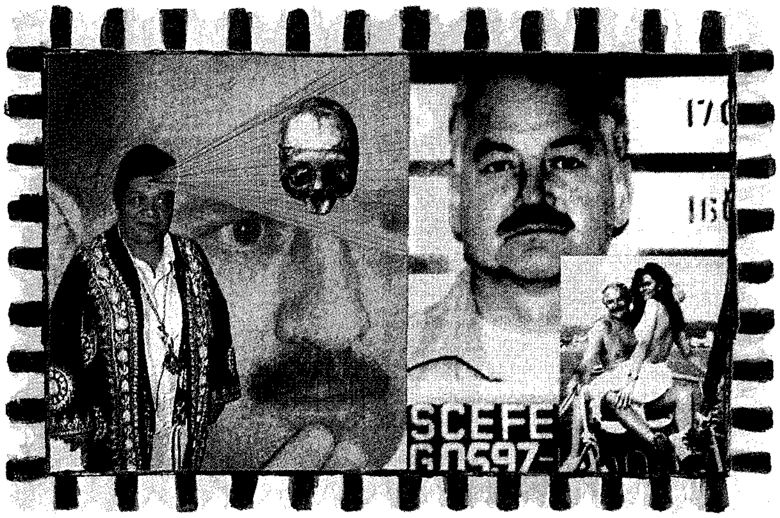
LETTER FROM MEXICO

THE RIDDLE OF RAÚL

Why is everyone so ready to believe that Raúl Salinas committed murder?

BY ALMA GUILLERMOPRIETO

THERE used to be no point to following the news in Mexico. Hardly anything ever happened, and whatever did happen was kept out of view by the media, thanks to a healthy sense of respect for the power of the long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI. This has changed: assassinations, kidnappings, and guerrilla uprisings are featured with frightening regularity, along with bizarre spectacles like that of former President Carlos Salinas de Gortari on a hunger strike, or the extradition of a noted drug trafficker—Juan García Abrego—who had to be stuffed into an airplane like a cat into a bag. The tide of events is such that Mexicans have come to approach their radios and television sets with a mixture of dread and anticipatory relish, and so it was on the evening of October 9th last year, when those of us who turned on the news realized from the flushed, wide-eyed look of the anchorman that events of great moment were about to be announced.

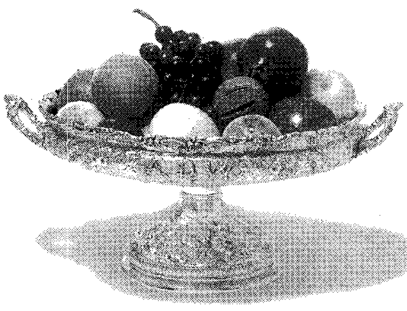


Allegations came from La Paca, the soothsayer, and from María Bernal, Salinas's former girlfriend, which were damning and linked in a curious way.

STEVEN DANA

Indeed, the anchorman said, there appeared to be a breakthrough in one of the most shocking of the terrible crimes that have recently undone the stability of the country's seventy-year-old regime. For more than a year, Raúl Salinas, who is a brother of Carlos, the former President, had stood accused of planning the assassination of the PRI secretary-general, José Francisco Ruiz Massieu, a rising star in Mexican politics who had once been married to Raúl and Carlos's sister. President Ernesto Zedillo, Carlos Salinas's successor, had staked his credibility on bringing Ruiz Massieu's murderers to justice, but the evidence presented by the prosecution had so far been scanty, at least partly because of a missing link between the imprisoned Raúl Salinas and Ruiz Massieu's actual murderers. The *diputado* Manuel Muñoz Rocha, a minor politician who was identified from the beginning as the man who orchestrated the killing, could have provided that link, but he had vanished on September 29, 1994, the day after Ruiz Massieu was slain, on a busy downtown street in Mexico City. Now, the anchorman said, there were indications that the remains of the fugitive Muñoz Rocha had been found.

Rain had been pouring relentlessly on the city, and on the police, whom the camera showed to be standing ankle deep in wet red earth. In an awed voice-over, a reporter identified the spot as a luxurious horse ranch belonging to none other than Raúl Salinas. The government's special prosecutor, Pablo Chapa Bezanilla, un-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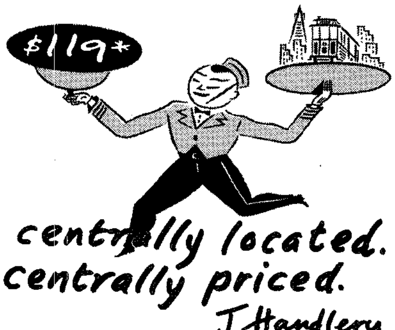
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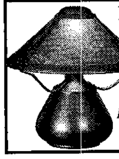

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perturbed by the rain and, in his triumph, seemingly oblivious of the mob of reporters, squatted by the excavation site and watched as a white-robed technician carefully set a muddy skull on a plastic tray. The camera zoomed in for a closer look, and the skull stared moodily back. This moment of national contemplation was broken when the anchorman, struggling to hide his perplexity, passed on to his audience what was then only a rumor but would turn out to be a fact—that the remains of the person who might be the long-sought Muñoz Rocha had been found with the assistance of a soothsayer.

So it was that the seer Francisca Zetina, better known by her nickname, La Paca, appeared on the scene. To the degree that she has proved to be deeply corrupt, she can be said to be in some sense remarkable, but she would never have become a nationally recognized figure if she had not become a public joke, and she would not have become even that but for one fact: she is a player in the murder trial of Raúl Salinas, who, as the brother of a former President, may well be the most powerful man ever to have been brought to trial in this country.

OFFICIALS did not make La Paca available for interviews after the discovery of the skeleton, but eventually reporters tracked her down at her home, and she gave the first of a series of memorable press conferences. Short, stocky, and pugnacious, the Special Prosecutor's spiritual assistant was carefully made up, had dressed for the occasion in what looked like an oversized Hawaiian shirt, and had a heavy load of amulets hanging on her chest. She said the Attorney General's office had provided her with one of the vanished Manuel Muñoz Rocha's old T-shirts, so she could feel his aura. She said that the bones had talked to her. She said that the association between her and Raúl Salinas actually went back a long way: before she helped to find the body buried on Raúl's land, La Paca declared, she used to give Raúl spiritual counsel. When? On this, and on other matters, La Paca was more reticent. Despite her communion with the bones, she couldn't affirm whether they belonged to Muñoz Rocha. But La Paca could with confidence state that certain vibrations at the burial site led her to the conviction that Manuel Muñoz Rocha "rose up from his tomb to point to his assassin." Reporters made an unconvincing attempt to match her straight face: Would La Paca please use her psychic vibrations to inform them whether Raúl Salinas would finally be sentenced for the crime?

As it happened, the discovery of the skeleton took place during the season in which Mexico gears up to celebrate not only the traditional Day of the Dead, when ornate skulls fashioned out of sugar are given as presents and laid on altars, but also a new holiday, Halloween, when children knock on neighbors' doors and ask for a sweet contribution with which to feed *mi calaverita*, meaning "my little skull"—a skull-shaped basket with no lid. As it also happened—and for reasons that were quite beyond the Attorney General's special prosecutor to explain—the skull found on Raúl Salinas's property was topless, too: by means of an electric saw normally used only by forensic examiners, the top of the cranium had been cut off and turned into a neat lid. Cartoonists had a field day; radio talk shows spoke of nothing but La Paca and the trepanned skull; and the mood of the special prosecutor, Chapa Bezanilla, went from triumph to unease. Why were certain parts of the skeleton that were critical to its easy identification, like the teeth and the fingers, missing? Why had the top of the cranium been sawed off? A mystery.

A mystery, La Paca answered, when pressed. The interviews got more aggressive and openly mocking, and La Paca's fluted vowels turned a little raspy as she grew agitated, but she always invoked higher powers. "It's true that I know more than I should," she would say. "In soothsaying and clairvoyance, I have the advantage over everyone else."

La Paca had friends, prominent among them María Bernal, a stunning woman who had once been on intimate terms with Raúl Salinas. It was probably María who provided La Paca with her careful makeup for the first press conference, and it had certainly been María who had turned over to prosecutors a picture seen around the world, in which María is shown straddling a beaming Raúl Salinas in the bow of a yacht. Long before the discovery of the skeleton, María had testified against Salinas to Special Prosecutor Chapa, who then leaked the famous photograph to the press, along with tidbits of María's testimony. (The trial itself had been declared off limits to the media.)

María seemed to have access to the

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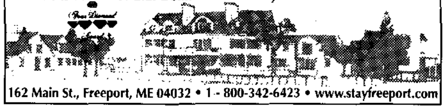

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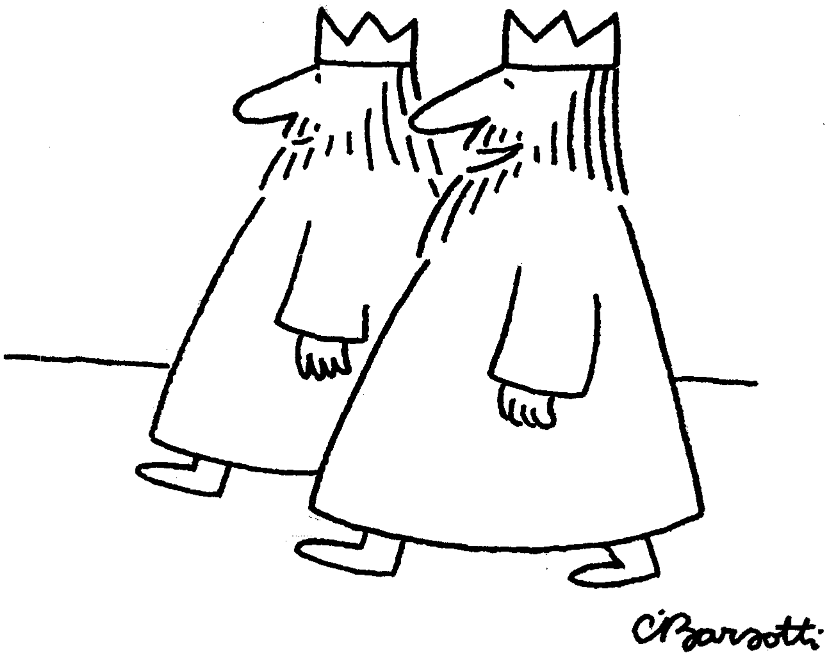

"I love the middle class, with their values and everything."

darkest secrets of Raúl's heart. She was from Spain and she had loved Raúl Salinas ever since the morning they first met, in Seville, in 1992. Drunk, he had wandered into the store where she worked as a salesgirl, and asked for her help in getting cleaned up and dressed in new clothes. She had come to Mexico to be with him, but he had betrayed her by marrying another woman—a lissome member of Mexican high society—the following year. Fortunately, she said in interviews, her contact with Salinas had allowed her to meet La Paca, and the seer had given her the only comfort she had known in Mexico. Then, after much doubt—after a year of doubt, to be precise—María Bernal had decided to come forward and testify as to what she knew: that a month before José Francisco Ruiz Massieu was murdered Raúl Salinas had come to her house, drunk white wine ("That's what he liked best"), had sex with her, and told her that he was very happy, because "that son of a bitch"—José Francisco Ruiz Massieu, who since his divorce from Raúl's sister had apparently been on less than friendly terms with his former brother-in-law—would soon be dead. María, when discussing delicate subjects like her feelings for Raúl Salinas, kept her eyes cast down becomingly.

Then there was the letter-writer. Raúl Salinas was arrested on February 28, 1995, five months after Ruiz Massieu's assassination. María came forward with her incriminating testimony on the following September 11th. The skeleton was found on Raúl's ranch on October 9th of last year. A few days later, Special Prosecutor Chapa apparently became upset by the persistent questions about the trepanned skull. He apparently also felt that it was time to correct the notion of the part played by the soothsayer in his investigation. Chapa had been in charge of investigating not only the murder of Ruiz Massieu but also that of Luis Donaldo Colosio, the PRI Presidential candidate, who was shot down in March of 1994, and that of Cardinal Posadas, the Archbishop of Guadalajara, who was killed, Chapa concluded, because someone had confused him with a drug trafficker known as Shorty Guzmán. By the time the skull surfaced, Chapa was in trouble, and the future of his job was in question. Except for the spectacular arrest of Raúl Salinas, Chapa had produced slim results in all three investigations, and his reputation for planting evidence was catching up with him: he had unwittingly videotaped himself—unmistakably skinny, red-haired, and foulmouthed—as he coached Raúl Salinas's key accuser on how to testify, and the incriminating tape had recently surfaced. Although Chapa almost never gave on-the-record interviews, reporters had come to expect leaked documents from him, and now he produced one more. It was a letter, allegedly delivered anonymously to La Paca together with a little map, which she had turned over to the justice system. That, and not some paranormal funny business with a T-shirt, had been her contribution to the discovery of the bones.

The author of the letter that was now reproduced in the media did not sign it, and so for the moment we will call him Anonymous. Anonymous began his letter by describing himself as a patriot. He was writing to La Paca, he added, because he knew—he did not explain how—that she had good connections in the Attorney General's office.

Seeking to improve his prospects, Anonymous wrote, he had looked up an old friend who in the fall of 1994 was working as a bodyguard for Raúl Salinas. That well-connected friend obligingly agreed to introduce Anonymous to his powerful boss, and drove him one day to Salinas's house.

"But, oh, what a surprise!" Anonymous wrote of the moment when he and his friend entered the house. A gory spectacle awaited them. Raúl Salinas was clutching a baseball bat and contemplating a bloody corpse lying at his feet, its head bashed in. Salinas "stared stupidly at me," Anonymous related, and soon the bodyguard told his friend that if he wished to stay out of trouble he would have to prove his loyalty. Accordingly, he and the bodyguard watched a mysterious doctor with a "foreign accent" dismember the body with an unspecified instrument and stuff it into a large burlap sack, which was then buried a few miles away, in a bosky corner of Salinas's horse ranch. This information Anonymous the patriot now felt compelled to share with La Paca—two years after the murder—so that justice might be done.

The revelation that Raúl Salinas might be a bat-wielding assassin all but subsumed the original mystery of whether he was the crafty plotter behind the murder of José Francisco Ruiz Massieu. La Paca buffs—that is to say, the nation—were obsessed instead with a series of subsidiary riddles. Did the bones at the Salinas ranch really belong to the fugitive Muñoz Rocha, the man who was said to have organized the killing of Ruiz Massieu? If not, whose bones were they? Who was Anonymous? Where were the foreign doctor and his terrifying instruments? (And why had it been necessary to saw off the top of the skull in order to fit it into a sack?) But the most perplexing question was not any of these. It was, rather, why such large numbers of Mexicans were willing to go to any lengths, including believing La Paca, in order to convince themselves that Raúl Salinas was guilty of a crime for which Special Prosecutor Chapa had yet to assign a motive. At least part of the answer had to do with the fact that Raúl's brother the former President, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, had become the person most deeply hated by most Mexicans. Indeed, today the entire Salinas family is commonly held to be the most corrupt of all the many groups who ever used the imperial power of the Mexican Presidency to accumulate untoward wealth.

THE former President's brother Raúl had been in trouble for some time before he was put in jail, and by now the essential outlines of his story have been reviewed often: Raúl and his younger siblings—Carlos, Adriana (the murdered Ruiz Massieu's ex-wife), and Enrique and Sergio, who are less well known—are the children of a former Cabinet minister, who wanted very badly to be President himself. Having failed in this ambition (a new President is handpicked every six years by the standing President, and the elder Salinas never got the nod), he groomed both Carlos and Raúl for the post. Carlos was brilliant, funny-looking, and studious. He married young and plugged away at a series of technocratic government jobs having to do with finance. Raúl graduated as an engineer, but he didn't do much work in his profession. He got a couple of degrees in France, worked on and off for the government, taught at the National University, and dallied with revolutionary Maoist organizations. Like his younger, less exciting brother, he was an expert horseman but, unlike him, he loved to have himself photographed in *charro* costume. He was an acknowledged ladies' man (he has been married three times), and he wrote—and published—some erotic ruminations, such as "My frequency will be your rhythm / and my tongue / a serpent of wisdom."

So much is part of the public record. What also appears to be true is that in 1992, four years into Carlos Salinas's Presidency, his Comptroller General, María Elena Vázquez Nava, warned him that there were strong indications that

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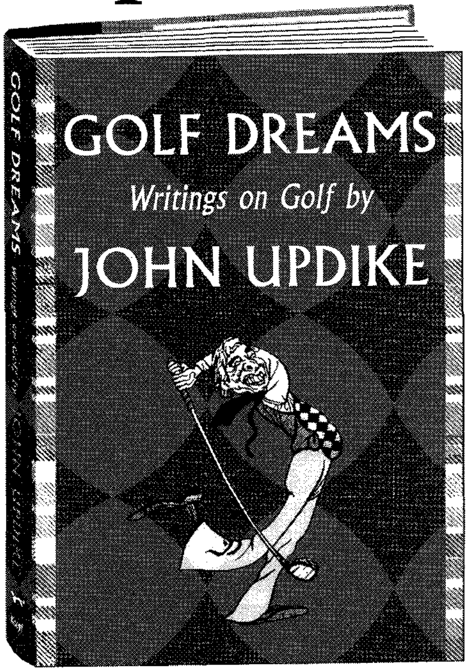

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Or mandrake. By the brook
I bent and parted the leaves.
Clefts. Veins. Smell

of musk, of mud. Tongue
slide of sap propelled
shaking under the green.

Stung Io, her sentries,
pale udder behind a bower—
day moon a white brow,

a chin sheer in water.
I wanted to put my face
to it, to its sheen

more animal than flower.

—CYNTHIA ZARIN

Raúl was involved in particularly nasty forms of corruption. Raúl was at the time a senior official in Conasupo, a government agency that distributes basic products—grains, milk, and the like—at subsidized prices to the poor. It was alleged that he was skimming large amounts of money off Conasupo sales. In addition, it was said, he was known as Mr. Ten Per Cent, because it was his practice to charge a commission on government contracts that he helped negotiate. Nor was that all: it was rumored that he had friends and business associates among persons wanted by the law for drug trafficking, including the notorious Juan García Abrego, who was extradited so unwillingly to the United States last year.

An official investigation into Raúl Salinas's finances revealed that in 1991 and 1992 he earned about ninety thousand dollars working for the government and during that same period he deposited around seven million dollars in various Mexican bank accounts. This is not such an unusual sum by the standards of Mexican politics, which, as a close relative of Raúl Salinas recently explained to me, lends itself to business. "It's not that they"—politicians—"are dirty but that they do business," she said. "They buy land when they know that a highway is going to pass through there. They get privileges. If you're in the government, even if you're only the doorman, you get things. It's normal." But it turns out that during the final years of his brother's Presidency Raúl also deposited more than a hundred million dollars in various bank accounts in Switzerland. There is no way of knowing whether this scale of profit also falls within the norm, because no other public official of equal standing has ever been arrested for the crime of "undue enrichment" or come forward to declare his wealth, but at this stage the sum strikes most people as excessive.

On December 1, 1994, Carlos Salinas handed over power to his elected successor, Ernesto Zedillo. Although the new President's Inauguration speech was for the most part indifferently received, it earned an ovation when he vowed to get to the bottom of the three political murders that had alarmed the country—those of Cardinal Posadas, the PRI candidate Colosio, and the PRI secretary-general Ruiz Massieu.

But Zedillo's priorities changed dramatically in the first few weeks of his government. His first major policy move, an abrupt de-facto devaluation of the peso, unleashed the country's most extreme economic crisis of the last seventy years. Five billion dollars in foreign portfolio investment left the country in a matter of days. Interest rates soared, hundreds of thousands of people were forced to de-

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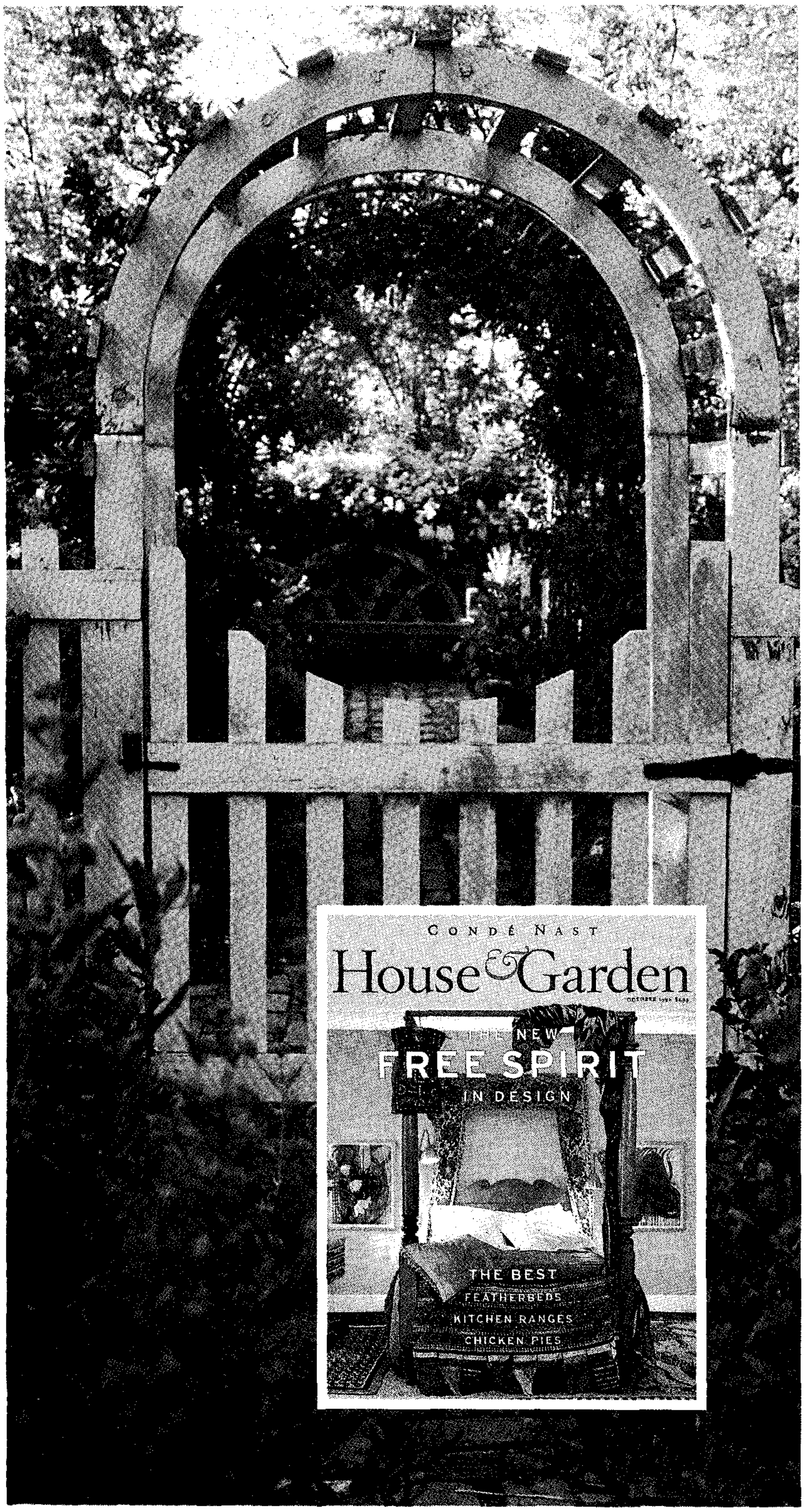

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fault on their loans, and the banking system was threatened with collapse. In the first weeks of 1995, the economy came to a near-standstill.

As the President and his Cabinet were seen to flounder, the possibility that Zedillo might have to resign was seriously discussed at dinner parties and in editorials. A joke made the rounds in February: "What do Easter and President Zedillo have in common? Answer: That one never knows whether they will fall in March or April." But in March the likelihood of Zedillo's resignation suddenly ceased to be a topic of conversation, and one of the principal reasons was a televised press conference given on February 28th of that year by the Special Prosecutor for the Ruiz Massieu, Colosio, and Posadas murders, Pablo Chapa Bezanilla. Chapa announced that Raúl Salinas de Gortari had been charged with the murder of José Francisco Ruiz Massieu and placed under arrest. No evidence was offered and the motive was not explained. Former President Salinas—who had already been condemned in the media and by overwhelming majority opinion for the economic crisis—immediately went on a brief hunger strike to protest his treatment, and then he left the country, perhaps forever.

Compared with the disoriented-looking former President, who let cameras record his fast and the moment when he broke it with some soup, Zedillo at least looked to be in command. And the revelation that another Salinas was responsible for an evil murder—and of his own brother-in-law—was greeted almost gleefully. It must have been tempting for the new President to believe that the Salinas clan was to blame for so many of the country's ills. Certainly the country as a whole was eager to believe that this was so.

The murder victim, Ruiz Massieu, was a complicated man, a voracious reader, and a scholarly writer on legal and constitutional topics. He was also, it seems, brutal when he felt brutality was called for. During his term as governor of Guerrero, between 1987 and 1993, dozens of members of the left-wing opposition were murdered, and none of the cases were ever prosecuted. If allegations currently being made in the United States prove true, he had connections to the drug trade. He had an unusual love life: his first wife, Adriana Salinas, the mother of two of his children, divorced him some twenty years ago, apparently because he was gay. But his relationship with President Salinas never suffered as a result of the divorce: Carlos Salinas promoted his governorship and, in 1994—around the time his murder was already being plotted—his command position in the ruling party. As a perceived Salinista, Ruiz Massieu must have borne the brunt of the anger that many of the more traditional members of the PRI felt for the President. In other words, José Francisco Ruiz Massieu did not lack for enemies.

Popular speculation abounds concerning Raúl's possible motives for ordering his murder: Raúl wanted to avenge his sister's honor, which had been sullied by Ruiz Massieu's sexual adventures. Raúl resented Ruiz Massieu's closeness to the President. Raúl and his former brother-in-law feuded over money. Ruiz Massieu had the goods on Raúl's shady business dealings. Perhaps. At this stage, the speculation is only that, because the central question of motive has still to be addressed by the prosecution.

RAÚL SALINAS was arrested on the basis of the testimony of one witness—Fernando Rodríguez González, a former congressional employee who had reported to the missing *diputado* Manuel Muñoz Rocha. Rodríguez was sentenced to fifty years in jail after he confessed to hiring a gunman and several accomplices, on orders from Muñoz Rocha. Since his arrest, two weeks after the murder, and in the course of nine depositions, Rodríguez has given substantially different versions of his original declaration, but the first ones did not implicate Raúl Salinas.

We now know that the Attorney General's office paid half a million dollars to Rodríguez's daughter on February 20, 1995, one week after Rodríguez González modified his testimony again. This time, he implicated Salinas. (It was during this period that Special Prosecutor Chapa accidentally videotaped himself coaching Rodríguez González on his testimony.)

Salinas, who remains in Mexico's only maximum-security prison even though he has not been convicted, was moved only two months ago from a tiny "punishment cell," according to his lawyer. He was kept under constant surveillance, with a light always burning overhead. Rodríguez González was transferred from that prison to the more relaxed Mexico City penitentiary after he changed his

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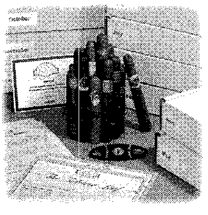

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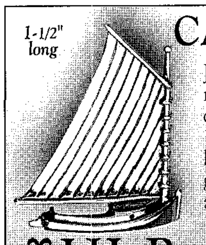

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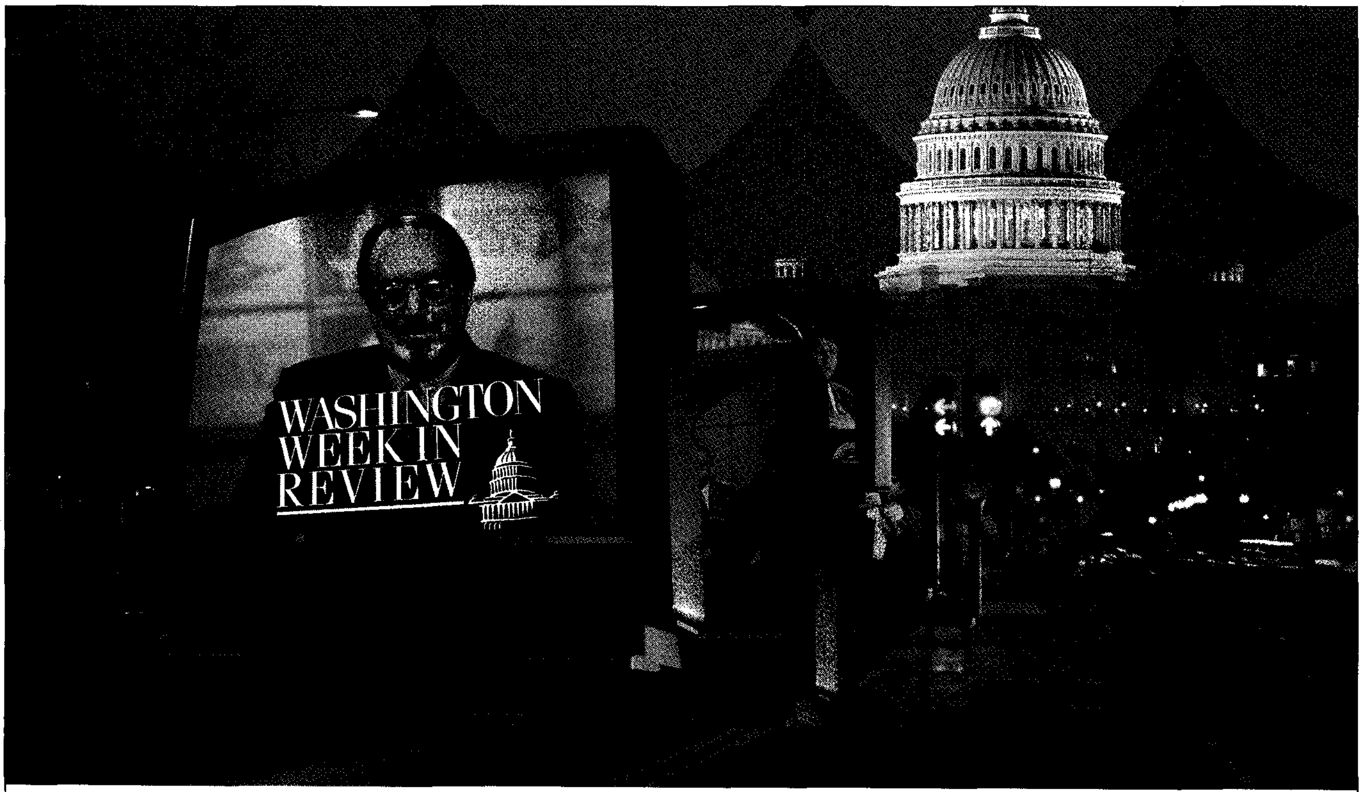
testimony, and there he was allowed to give a couple of interviews, in his own suite of cells. He held forth on the subjects of power, corruption, and the evil nature of the Salinas brothers, and mentioned a startling assortment of politicians as co-participants in the murder plot. (None of them have been prosecuted by the Attorney General's office.)

Official records show that La Paca received far scantier benefits the following year for her collaboration with Chapa and his employers, but that she worked harder. It is not yet known whether she was acting on Chapa's orders or on her own initiative, but what is known is that the skeleton that was unearthed last October on Raúl Salinas's ranch had been put there by La Paca's relatives in order to give the Special Prosecutor something to dig up, and that after Chapa's crew failed to find the bones during a first search La Paca and María Bernal came along to help. La Paca also recruited Anonymous—who, it turns out, was one of her longtime associates and also appears to have been the lover of her sister Patricia—to write the letter about Raúl Salinas and the horrid doctor and the baseball bat.

We know all this because in December, after long-delayed results of DNA tests on the skeleton failed to establish that it belonged to the missing Muñoz Rocha, President Zedillo fired his Attorney General and, with him, Special Prosecutor Chapa. Chapa went into hiding in January, and surfaced only in mid-May, in Madrid, where he was arrested pending extradition to Mexico. He has not responded to a statement issued in January by the office of the new Attorney General, Jorge Madrazo, regarding the handling of Raúl Salinas's trial. This statement revealed the first details of some liberties taken by Chapa's people in their pursuit of Raúl Salinas, any one of which—a disbursement of half a million dollars to the key witness against the former President's brother, say—might have sparked a small scandal in a different context. But seen in the proper light these stratagems seem tame, and even cowardly, because what sent cartoonists and vaudeville comedians into a new frenzy of exultation, what inspired a hit salsa song—"I'll Trade You the Shovel for the Bat"—on a nightly satirical puppet show ("Is that a new Metro line they're digging?" "No, it's Chapa Bezanilla excavating!"), was the account in the Attorney General's investigators' report of La Paca's real dealings with the skeleton.

Long before La Paca became a soothsayer, she had played her own small part in Mexican politics. There are newscast images of her from some fifteen years ago, looking stocky, pugnacious, and dishevelled, in the aftermath of a squatters' action she helped coördinate. One of La Paca's sisters, Leticia, told me about it. La Paca and her sisters were among many local leaders spawned by Mexico City's population explosion—men and women who mobilized landless people like themselves to take over empty lots on the spreading outskirts of the city. There was a prescribed form for these confrontations, which was followed in 1982 by Francisca Zetina—as La Paca was still known—and some five thousand squatters she had helped to muster: they squatted, the government sent in the riot police, and La Paca negotiated. In normal



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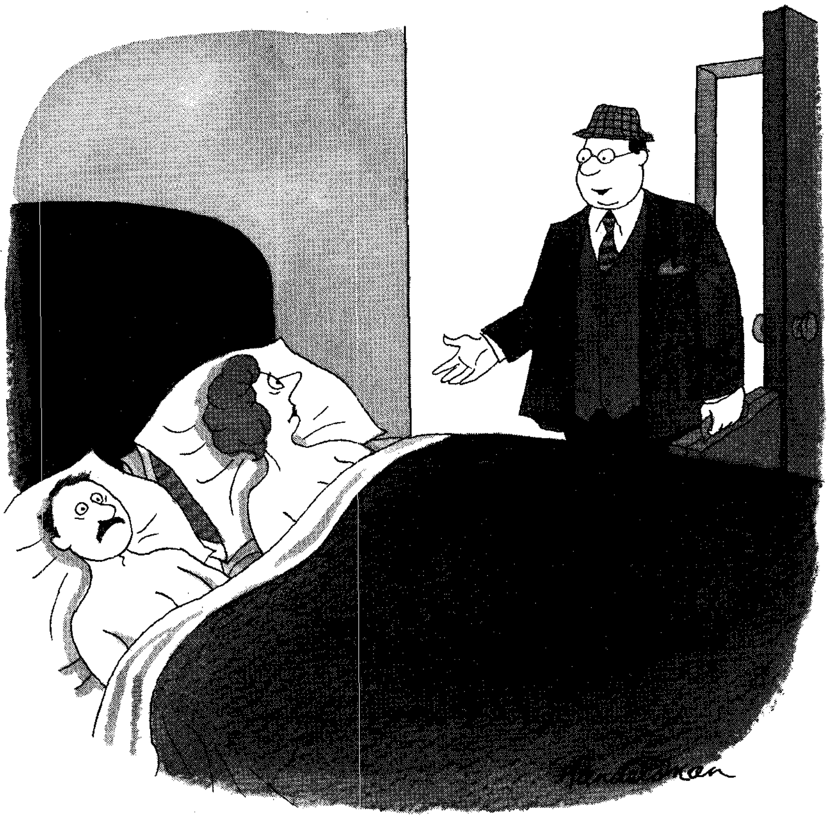
circumstances, the government would have paid off the land's original owners, La Paca would have received some portion of the occupied land to parcel out among her followers, a new shantytown would have been born and baptized in honor of a local PRI politician, and La Paca might then have continued in power, providing votes at election time and crowds for the huge rallies that the PRI stages on patriotic occasions. Leticia Zetina is not explicit about what went wrong in this particular case, except to say that the local municipal authority was asking for too much—a house on the occupied land and a car—in exchange for his protection.

"My sister did a good job," Leticia says. "That settlement still exists, and it is what it is thanks to her. The layout of the streets, the sewage system were all hers." Despite this, the Zetina family had to migrate once again, right across the city to the *delegación*, or borough, of Iztapalapa. They kept a lower profile after this move, partly because of some run-ins with the son of a man who was for years the most powerful member of the PRI in the neighborhood—a man known as El Líder, who ruled over the garbage pickers of the nearby municipal dump.

The whole Zetina family is eager to avoid the press these days, and that is understandable. La Paca and two of her daughters, her sister Patricia, a son-in-law, and a brother-in-law are in jail on charges related to the skeleton. (La Paca's anonymous letter-writing collaborator is on the lam.) But the laws of Mexican hospitality prevented Leticia, who has not been charged, from turning me away when I called on her on a recent hot, dry day.

The Zetina family lives in a particularly cheerless redoubt of what was once the picturesque village of Santa Cruz Meyehualco and is now part of the dusty, barren sprawl of urban poverty that surrounds much of the capital. La Paca's house, which is two-storied and has chrome-colored window frames, can be considered fancy only by the standards of the neighborhood, but it is indisputably large. When I arrived, Leticia had just returned from her daily visit to her imprisoned relatives and their lawyers, and I walked in with her through the main entrance, which leads directly into the kitchen, and on into a dining room, in which an oversized table barely fitted. Leticia, who looks very much like La Paca, was dressed in her courtroom best: a flower-print blouse, a black skirt, and little black heels, none of which were new. In its own way, though, the family is prosperous: at one point in our conversation we were interrupted by an electronic chirp, and Leticia fished a cellular phone out of a fake-leather handbag.



"I don't doubt that it's perfectly innocent, Margaret, but it does have the appearance of impropriety."

La Paca didn't renounce politics altogether when she moved here. According to published interviews with some of her neighbors, she sold raffle tickets for a fattened pig and kept the pig. She got into fistfights with other neighborhood women for control of the scarce water supply. And she organized. "When we arrived here in Santa Cruz, this was a disaster, too," Leticia recalls. "My sister was the one who started to organize the people, to bring in light and water and everything else. And she did it all with the Party. Now the PRI wants to disown her, but she never belonged to any other party. She's been a PRIista to the marrow all her life. Maybe not everybody likes her in the neighborhood, but I've got people gathering signatures for a proclamation of support for her. And people say to me all the time, 'Just say the word, and we'll go to the jail and hold a rally for her.' But it's not time for that yet."

Leticia insists that La Paca "did the thing"—buried the skeleton—on Raúl Salinas's orders. According to this version (which is believed by the taxi-driver who took me to visit Leticia, and by quite a few reporters covering the trial, among others), the whole episode of the bones, so farcical in hindsight, was devised by Salinas as a way of discrediting the proceedings against him. Be that as it may, neither Leticia nor her sister disputes the facts of the story, which centers on the cemetery of Tláhuac, some distance south of Iztapalapa.

Like the village that Tláhuac once was, the cemetery itself, thanks to eucalyptus trees and whitewashed walls, is modest and pleasant. By the grace of what La Paca would probably describe as karma, it is just a block and a half away from a *consultorio espiritual* that she had set up in the neighborhood, and is also very close to a primary school named in honor of La Paca's very often invoked spiritual protector, John F. Kennedy. Tláhuac proudly remains a traditional community, with a Day of the Dead celebration that seeks to outshine all the others in this still semirural part of Mexico City. Accordingly, local authorities

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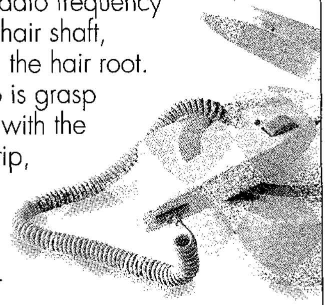

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tore down much of the cemetery wall for repairs last September in preparation for the big November festivities. Local law also reflects community traditions: only native Tlahuacans and local residents can be buried there, and among them is the father of the man who last year married one of La Paca's daughters.

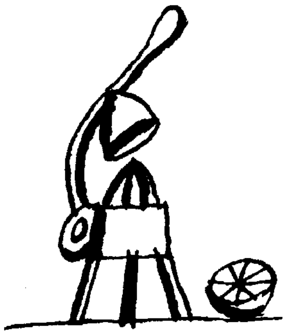
The father's name was Joaquín Rodríguez Ruiz, and of all the modest graves in Tláhuac his is among the poorest. Instead of a tombstone, the spot is marked by a rusty iron cross, and his name, along with that of his wife, who died in 1995, is painted in whitewash on a small tin rectangle. Rodríguez Ruiz died in late 1993. An autopsy report—which always includes a skull trepanning—names the cause of death as head trauma. His family never managed to pay for a gravestone, and this eventually turned out to be a great advantage for his son, Joaquín *hijo.*

The younger Joaquín had become involved in mystical sessions led by La Paca and presided over by the spirit of John F. Kennedy—so involved that he eventually married one of La Paca's daughters. He turned out to be an unusually pliant son-in-law, according to the Attorney General's report, because on the night of October 3rd he equipped himself with a shovel, jumped over what remained of the cemetery wall, and, following his mother-in-law's instructions, removed the few spadefuls of earth that covered his mother's coffin. He removed that coffin, uncovered the coffin that lay underneath, which was his father's, and looted its contents. Prosecutors later found that in his haste he left behind some fingers and teeth. From the cemetery he went to Raúl Salinas's ranch (which is called El Encanto, or The Charm) and there, with the help of the night watchman (who is married to but estranged from La Paca's sister Patricia), he buried his father once more. Six days later, Special Prosecutor Chapa presided over the disinterment of the skeleton, accompanied by La Paca and her friend María Bernal.

Asked about the charges La Paca faces as a result of these events, Leticia, who has a highly personal definition of certain words, explained, "She's accused of conspiracy to commit a crime, but where's the conspiracy? It was all in the family. You can't conspire with your family! And then they say that she's guilty of illegal exhumation. But there wasn't a real exhumation." Joaquín's father, she said, was "completely rotted already, and all they took out was the bones."

I RECENTLY had a chance to see, if not to meet, Raúl Salinas, in the course of a trial procedure that was open to the press. There are no jury trials in the Mexican legal system—only a series of presentations by lawyers for the prosecution and the defense, dictated depositions by witnesses, and a procedure called a *careo*, a confrontation between accuser and accused in front of a presiding judge. Public access to the Salinas trial has been severely restricted in the past (and trial records are secret), but last month reporters—without their cameras and tape recorders—were allowed into the maximum-security prison where Raúl Salinas is kept, some forty miles west of Mexico City. The occasion was a *careo* between Raúl and María Bernal, the woman who accused him of telling her after a night of passion that he, Raúl, had decided to arrange for the murder of José Francisco Ruiz Massieu. She had been arrested with La Paca after Chapa's downfall on charges related to the skeleton. The confrontation between María and Raúl promised fireworks, so there was a large contingent of local correspondents from the nearby city of Toluca—reporters who are covering the country's most important trial for the various national media and who are, by and large, undertrained, underpaid, and overworked stringers. Also present in the small, windowless courtroom were Raúl's children from his previous marriages; Raúl's wife, Paulina; and her children by a previous marriage. (Another frequent visitor is Raúl's sister, Adriana, the former wife of the murdered José Francisco Ruiz Massieu. She has defended her brother's innocence all along.)

Although María Bernal is still remarkable-looking—doe-eyed, dark-haired, and Gypsyish—she appeared skinny and unhappy after her weeks in prison. Raúl—mustachioed, partly bald, dark-eyed, and physically fit—looked bored and disgusted after his two years in prison, but he still has about him the self-assurance and the polite cordiality of the Mexican upper class. He cheered up immensely when the judge told him that he could, for once, speak without interference—unless one counts as interference the fact that he had to deliver himself of his declaration slowly enough for a fumbling stenographer to take it all down. Despite this, and in the course of some five hours, he gave a riveting performance. Or, at least, I thought he did. My reading of the event was that Raúl used the hundreds of pages of María Bernal's earlier declarations against him—he had them read into the trial record once again—to establish that their relationship had lasted barely two weeks, in September of 1993 (part of the court record is a letter that María wrote two years later to Raúl complaining bitterly about his long indifference); that he had then hired her to do small jobs for him, for his father, and for his new wife, Paulina (María, in her depositions, freely admits this, and refers to Raúl's wife as *la señora* Paulina); that it was Paulina—who may have known nothing about the earlier liaison—who gave María permission to live in her old house; that Raúl and Paulina fired her at last, in 1994; that shortly before she was fired from a new job, a clerical position Raúl had recommended her for, and at a time when Raúl was already in prison, María started making the rounds of the Salinas family, asking for money and threatening revenge in meetings that the family took the precaution of taping.



Raúl also quoted from a letter that María had sent him in prison, which has been part of the court record for months. In it she wrote, "There is a person whose name I can't say, who is pressuring me to testify against you, saying falsehoods." This person was threatening to deport her if she did not comply, María wrote, and in the courtroom Raúl concluded that he could be none other than Special Prosecutor Chapa Bezanilla, who had it within his power to issue a deportation warrant. (In September of 1995, days before she testified, Bernal began receiving a monthly allowance for rent and gasoline, and a car, from Chapa.)

Almost all this information was new to me, since it had been reported only glancingly in the local press, and I could imagine what the following day's headlines might be: "SALINAS, SPEAKING IN HIS OWN DEFENSE, MAKES A STRONG CASE FOR HIS INNOCENCE." But what Raúl could not prove—since there had been no witnesses—was that he did not tell María after having sex with her (some time after the period in which she complained that he was ignoring her) that his former brother-in-law, "that son of a bitch" José Francisco Ruiz Massieu, would soon be dead. The courtroom dispute between María Bernal and Raúl Salinas over the truth or falsehood of this statement soon degenerated into a shouting match (it was late in the evening by then), and this spat—"a lovers' quarrel"—was the focus of the next day's stories.

It is, of course, entirely possible that Raúl Salinas ordered the death of Ruiz Massieu. The fact that at this stage all the evidence to that effect is tainted, that Special Prosecutor Chapa is now in a jail cell in Madrid, that his boss, former Attorney General Lozano Gracia, has acknowledged authorizing payments to witnesses who testified against Salinas ("The President knew," the former Attorney General said in his defense, though the President denies it), and that the new prosecution team has still to come forward with conclusive evidence and a motive does not prove the contrary. The new Attorney General, Jorge Madrazo, and his deputy attorney general both left the National Human Rights Commission to take their new jobs, and their reputations are unimpeachable. The deputy, José Luis Ramos Rivera, is adamant that the case against Raúl Salinas remains strong. "I am convinced that the payments"—made to La Paca, María Bernal, and Rodríguez González—"did not induce them to lie," he told me in a recent interview.

It is far more likely, however, that Raúl Salinas is guilty of some very questionable financial operations, which could include money laundering on a vast scale, and this is why his murder trial, for all its farcical proceedings, is ultimately not funny at all. There is, after all, at least a hundred million dollars—and probably much more—sitting in various banks in Switzerland which is still to be accounted for. Raúl insists that he can explain the legitimate origins of his immense fortune, and that only the fear that this information might be used against him "for tax purposes" prevents him from clearing his name immediately. But the office of the Prosecutor General of Switzerland, Carla del Ponte, is looking for alternative explanations. After sixteen months of examining the paper trail of the Swiss bank deposits, the prosecutors say that they believe that Raúl Salinas de Gortari acquired his fortune by laundering money for Mexico's flourishing drug exporters. The evidence gathered by the Swiss will probably be presented in a trial for undue enrichment that should get under way in Mexico sometime this year.

This new trial of Raúl Salinas should have momentous consequences not only for him but for venerable institutions like Citibank, which handled the transfer of more than fifty million dollars from Mexico to Europe for the former President's brother without, it appears, asking any uncomfortable questions. If Raúl Salinas is indeed guilty of money laundering, a successful trial would go far toward bringing to light the complex international web of legitimate and criminal business interests that makes it possible to reap profits from cocaine. It would allow Mexicans to understand how politics and business became infiltrated and corrupted by the drug trade in a relatively short time. It would bring an unprecedented degree of accountability to the business of politics, by bringing to justice a ranking member of the country's previously untouchable ruling élite.

But the likelihood that this will happen—or, for that matter, that the crime against José Francisco Ruiz Massieu will be satisfactorily explained—looks small, to judge from the goings on in the trial of Raúl Salinas for the 1994 murder of a man who was not only his former brother-in-law but also the secretary-general of the PRI. ♦

CORRECTION OF THE WEEK

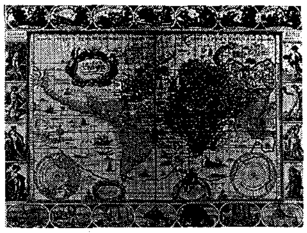
[*From the Berkeleyan*]

The March 19 issue of Berkeleyan included a Gazette item on Andrea diSessa winning a Spencer Mentor Award.

Zack Rogow of the School of Education writes to point out that Professor Andrea diSessa is described as 'she.' In fact, he is a she.

Apologies to Professor diSessa.

AUCTIONS AT SWANN



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PERSONAL HISTORY

MY WATCH, A TRUE STORY

The secret life of jewelry.

BY MURIEL SPARK

I WILL never know the full story, because I bought the watch secondhand from a jeweller in Hatton Garden, London, at the end of the nineteen-fifties. I was writing my first books, and had determined that every time I published a book I would buy a jewel to mark the occasion, for otherwise the money could just disappear into the house-keeping funds. I bought this to mark the publication of my novel "Memento Mori."

It was a Cartier diamond watch in a platinum case with a white-gold wristband, then about thirty years old. It was an elegant affair, not a bit showy for everyday wear in those days. The price was around three hundred pounds, even then fairly modest. I didn't think of it as a special piece, although one day while I was lunching in New York with Brendan Gill he admired my "classy watch."

In 1968, I went to live in Italy and my watch went with me. It happened that in the late seventies I was moving house in Rome and was advised to put any small valuables in the bank during this tumultuous time. I left the watch in the bank, for by this date good jewelry was not much worn except in the evening.

I had a real affection for that watch, though; and when one day the bank rang up to say its vaults had been flooded it was the watch I thought of first of all. At the bank, when we waded through to the safety boxes, all was mud. My box was in the fourth level from the bottom. Mud, mud, everywhere. Under the distressed eyes of the manager, who kept saying I was insured for only a minimum sum, I filled a black plastic bag with the goodies I retrieved by plunging my hand into the mud-filled safe. It took weeks to get that mud off my possessions. The original jewel cases that the few necklaces and brooches had been stored in were quite ruined. Some of these were Georgian and Victorian. And my Cartier watch had suffered greatly. I took it to an expert restorer of antique watches. He took out and cleaned the movement. He cleaned the case. He put in a new movement for practical purposes but gave me the original one, with its still functioning features, in a separate envelope. The bank paid the bill. I started wearing my watch again. I loved it, and it didn't show much under my long-sleeved jerseys.

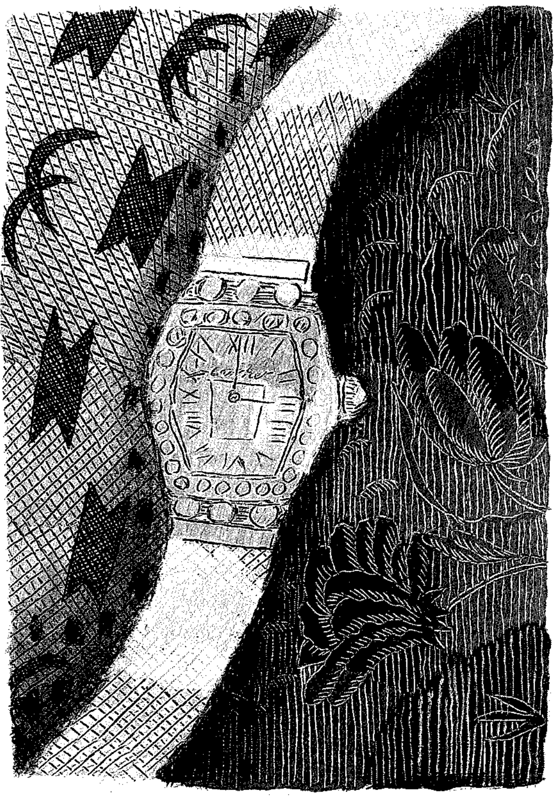
Pass another twenty years. One day, on return from my holidays, I noticed that one small diamond was missing from the watch. With my friend Penelope I took it, for replacement of the diamond, to a jeweller of long acquaintance in Arezzo. It is now November 8, 1996. "X" is a charming, elderly artisan-type Italian who is good at mending clocks and watches and keeps a stock of tempting handmade rings and brooches and rare stones, often on display in his windows. He examined the watch and the diamonds through his jeweller's lens. He wasn't pleased with the glass cover. The shape of the watch was hexagonal, and we saw that, yes, the glass moved when it shouldn't have done.

Lurking outside the right-hand window was a short man with dyed black hair. He didn't immediately enter the shop, although the door was open and remained so. He was to reappear in my memory a few hours later as "a shady character," but at the time he seemed to be someone our jeweller friend knew.

In the meantime, the jeweller had taken out the movement of my watch. He said, "This is not Cartier but another make." I told him I had the original movement at home. He was insistent that we agree the present works of the watch were not the original Cartier, because he didn't want us to think afterward that he had changed them. As to the glass, that would be difficult. A special artisan could perhaps adjust it so that it didn't touch the hands. He said he would see about a suitable diamond. It might be difficult, as they weren't made that way anymore. He would have to get one from Florence, but he wouldn't send the diamond-studded case as this was too risky. I begged him to do his best to get a good match. He asked for a week, eight days. Would we give him a ring next Friday?

The "shady character" was still lurking outside the window. I noticed, and remembered later, that he had come into the shop, left his windbreaker on the back of a chair inside, and gone out. Meanwhile, a tall, brown-haired young man entered. A commercial traveller, he had some samples to show our friend.

After we left, Penelope and I nosed at the window again from the outside. I had earlier noticed a circular brooch of filigree goldwork with a pearl in the middle surrounded by rather milky light-green emeralds. I went back into the shop to discuss the price. It was about seven hundred and fifty dollars, but I knew he would make it less if I really wanted it. He showed me another brooch, with a gold bow and a blue agate drop; same price. Penelope agreed it was pretty but rather conventional. We said we would think about the gold-filigree



PHILIPPE CARON

brooch, and the jeweller put it in his safe. He often did this if either of us was thinking over a purchase. In this case, he said, it was unlikely that anyone would want to buy it. It had been in stock since the nineteen-sixties. The morning wore on; there was no hurry. Our friend also showed us a long oblong brooch of the sixties, rubies set in blue enamel. People generally wanted more modern pieces these days.

We left the shop at midday and drove home to Penelope's house in the country, arriving at twelve-thirty. By one-forty-five, we had finished our lunch. Penelope made some coffee for us to take along to the television while we caught the news.

By now, a fax had arrived. The jeweller. Ring him *Urgently* at 2 P.M.

The watch, he said, had been stolen. He was very upset, and wanted to know if I was insured. "No," I said. "But you should be insured." He wasn't.

I persuaded him to go to the carabinieri and report the loss. He was convinced that a young couple who had come in after we had left had taken the watch. They had asked to see something from the window, and while his back was turned one of them must have reached over the counter to his worktable, where the watch lay, and taken it. The couple had left without making a purchase. I was really sorry for our man. He said he had been unable to eat his lunch. It was almost impossible, he thought, that the police would catch the couple.

I knew he was trying to get me to evaluate the loss. But I couldn't do it. Thirty-seven years had passed since I made the original purchase. The watch was now sixty-odd years old. I told him I'd be in touch, and besought him in the meantime to get something to eat.

Now began our afternoon's tour of research. I rang round all the people who might know what a Cartier nineteen-thirties diamond watch might fetch on today's market. Without seeing it, Cartier themselves were cautious, but opined a sum that I thought head-spinning. I tried Christie's in various European countries. They were extremely kind and nonspecific but equally dazzling in their estimates. "It's only a diamond watch of the nineteen-thirties," I said. I telephoned eight people, one recommending the next, and faxed several others with a drawing that Penelope had made of the watch. I found a Christie's catalogue with a very similar actual antique Cartier watch, except that the bracelet part was encrusted with precious stones. This ran into hundreds of thousands of dollars. But the consensus was that my watch was worth thousands of dollars. Lots of thousands.

I knew I wouldn't know what to do then. Being deprived of my simple, everyday watch was my real loss. I hadn't thought in terms of fat money. And as for selling it, well, I wouldn't sell such an old friend. I kept ringing round, hoping that someone would say, "I'm afraid those old Cartier watches are only worth the weight of the platinum case and the tiny brilliants; no real value today." But nobody said any such thing. Faxes came pouring in. Could I send details of purchase, the date, photocopy of a guarantee, the number on the watch, etc.? "Cartier," stated one of the faxes, "will be able to trace it should the watch appear on the market" and "Cartier can provide a document stating the value of your watch."

We thought of our jeweller, distraught, not a very rich man, not really. Not up to the Cartier level. And not young. I hoped he had eaten something.

Another fax. Not from Christie's, or from Cartier's this time, but from him. He is an excellent goldworker and a fine jeweller, but not so brilliant at grammatical expression. He wrote (in Italian, of course): "I am the goldworker 'X.' I give good news my wife having put herself to rummage in all the drawers under my worktable retrieved your watch which one can see having it in hand at the workbench when they entered it fell or else I let it slide I don't know however I made a declaration to the police and then I went to annul it thanks and excuse me 'X.' "

The rest of the evening I spent sending faxes of thanks and explanation to all the grand contacts through whose hands we had passed that afternoon. It was a happy ending, though in a way a sad one. I have my watch—such an old, old friend, which I would never sell unless from the necessity of a really rainy day. At the same time, I can't go round this old Tuscan house and garden, to the shops and the supermarkets and my friends, dripping with all those presumed thousands. Back in the safety box goes my friend, the watch, from which I've derived so much pleasure for the best part of my life. Nevermore do I leave it knocking around on my bedside table, or my desk, or on the side of the washbasin. Nevermore; nevermore. ◆

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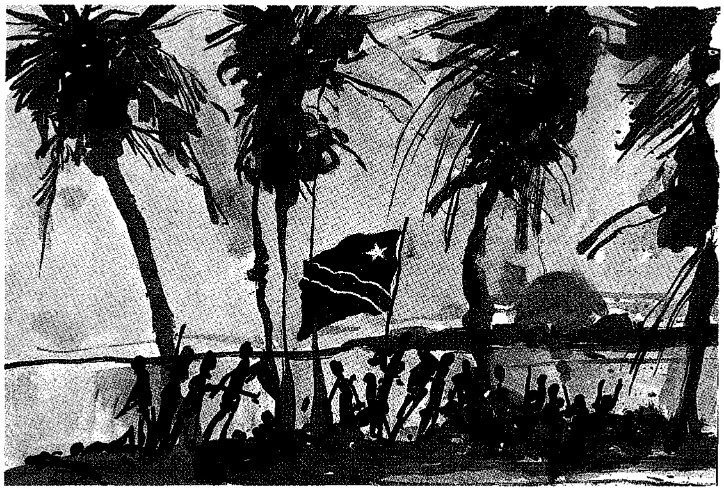
THE VANISHING

How the Congo became Zaire, and Zaire became the Congo.

BY PHILIP GOUREVITCH

ON the night of November 10th last year, Laurent Désiré Kabila, the leader of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire, held a press conference in Goma, a city close to the eastern frontier.



Mobutu's Zaire was a fiction. Can Kabila's Congo offer a reality check?

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER

The rebels had captured Goma from the Zairean Army of President Mobutu Sese Seko at the beginning of the month, and Kabila had just moved into a house left vacant by a Mobutist general. His soldiers shuttled reporters there through a driving rain. We found Kabila in the living room, seated behind a small table—a stout, rather youthful-looking fifty-seven-year-old, wearing olive fatigues, a matching baseball cap, hexagonal spectacles, and pointy two-tone brown shoes. As we settled into the ousted general's leather loungers, one reporter remarked on the discipline of Kabila's troops, noting that it was a novelty to be in Zaire without constantly being touched for bribes by agents of the state. Kabila listened, then muttered, "This is not Zaire."

Where were we, then? "This is a liberated zone of the national territory," Kabila said, and he went on to explain, "Zaire is a fabrication of the dictator. This is the liberated territory of Congo." True: the name "Zaire," which is said to be an antique Portuguese bastardization of a local word for "river," had been imposed on the country in 1971 at the whim of Mobutu, who had seized power six years earlier. Mobutu conjured it up as part of a program of "authenticity," and, in the spirit of Louis XIV's "*L'État c'est moi*," he was fond of boasting that "there was no Zaire before me, and there will be no Zaire after me." In the event, Kabila has made Mobutu's word good. His first official act after declaring himself Mobutu's replacement as President, on May 17th, was to restore to the country the name Mobutu had scrapped: the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Congo itself was invented as a country in 1885 at a conference table in Berlin, where European leaders had gathered to parcel up the map of Africa. The supremely cunning Leopold II, King of the Belgians, secured exclusive private title to the immense territory—roughly the size of the United States east of the Mississippi—surrounding the Congo River Basin. (The river was named after the dominant tribe populating its banks.) In one of the more dazzling diplomatic hustles in the history of colonialism, Leopold framed his landgrab as a philanthropic undertaking. He touted his Congo Free State as a sort of preserve for the natives, promising to protect them from slavers and from their own depredations, and to elevate them into the civilized ranks of modernity. In fact, Leopold's rule was savage; by 1908, when control of the Congo was transferred to the Belgian state, his agents were said to have killed as many as ten million Congolese. But in the beginning the King had claimed that his model for the Congo would be the United States, and even before the Berlin conference Washington, flattered, had promised to recognize the new state.

Last week, America was again one of the first countries to recognize the Congo. "We will no longer be calling this country Zaire," the State Department's spokesman, Nicholas Burns, reported. "Zaire went away on Friday afternoon with Mobutu. That country has vanished."

So Zaire was a fiction, and we have come to The End. Mobutu's "authenticity" campaign was among the weirder facets of the Zairean make-believe, and it was emblematic of his megalomania. It wasn't just the country, and many of its cities, that had their names changed; Mobutu, who liked to appear on television in clips that showed him walking on clouds, claimed the Adamic power of renaming all of his subjects—or, at least, requiring them to abandon their Christian names and take up African ones. In pursuit of the "authentic," he also nationalized all foreign businesses, put in place a constitution granting himself absolute power, prescribed a national dress code (neckties and suits were outlawed in favor of a snappily modified Mao shirt), replaced crucifixes with his portrait, struck Christmas from the holiday calendar, rendering it a normal working day, and purged every vestige of political opposition.

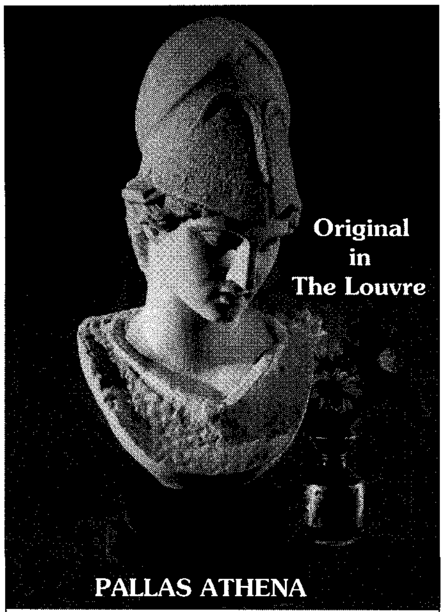
"We are resorting to this authenticity," Mobutu once said, "in order to rediscover our soul which colonization had almost erased from our memories and which we are seeking in the tradition of our ancestors." His principle, then, was a double negative: to erase the corrupt memory that had erased the genuine national memory, and so to restore that original chain of memory. The idea was romantic, nostalgic, and fundamentally incoherent. The place Mobuto called Zaire had never been a nation before Leopold drew the map, and the very word "authenticity"—an import from the French existentialism that had been the vogue during Mobutu's youth—was blatantly at odds with his professed Africanism. One is reminded of Pol Pot, who returned to Cambodia from the Sorbonne, changed the country's name to Kampuchea, chucked out the calendar, proclaimed "Year Zero," and slaughtered a million or more of his countrymen to eradicate Western influences.

Mobutu, to magnify his own grandeur, systematically reduced Zaire to rot. The nation was driven back into the jungle, and an alarming number of Western commentators took cynical solace in the conviction that this state of affairs *was* about as authentic as Africa gets. Leave the natives to their own devices, the thinking went, and—*voilà!*—Zaire.

Of course, Mobutu was merely a capricious puppet of Western patrons, incapable of holding on to his power by himself, and ultimately even the idea of authenticity was abandoned to decay, as he shed any pretext of ideology in favor of absolute gangsterism. Zaireans—who used to be obliged to gather and chant Mobutist slogans like "It is better to die of hunger than to be rich and a slave to colonialism!"—watched Mobutu grow richer while they just grew hungrier. With time, some even dared to modify Mobutu's pet mantra, "The Three Z's"—Zaire the country, Zaire the river, and Zaire the currency—by privately adding a fourth Z: Zaire the Zero.

And then, one day, forty-four million people are told that they are once again Congolese, and the State Department proclaims a vast country "vanished." How does this work? Mobutu attempted to set back the clock, and now Kabila appears to be doing the same thing: even the "new" flag of the country is the old pre-authenticity flag. But the memory that Mobutu purported to reclaim was a phantasm, based on a categorical denial of reality. By contrast, Kabila's revival of the Congo signals a wish to recapture the tremendous national hope that greeted independence from Belgium in 1960.

Mobutu's ascent to power, between 1960 and 1965, was accomplished with the assistance of the C.I.A. and various bands of white mercenaries, through a systematic suppression of a Congolese nationalist movement. Only one regional commander of that movement remained alive and at large—though largely ineffective in an isolated mountain stronghold—throughout the Mobutist era. That was Laurent Kabila, and, as Herbert



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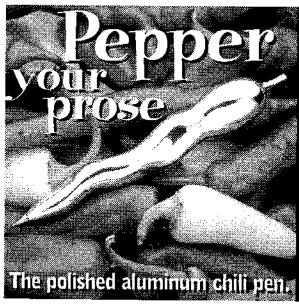

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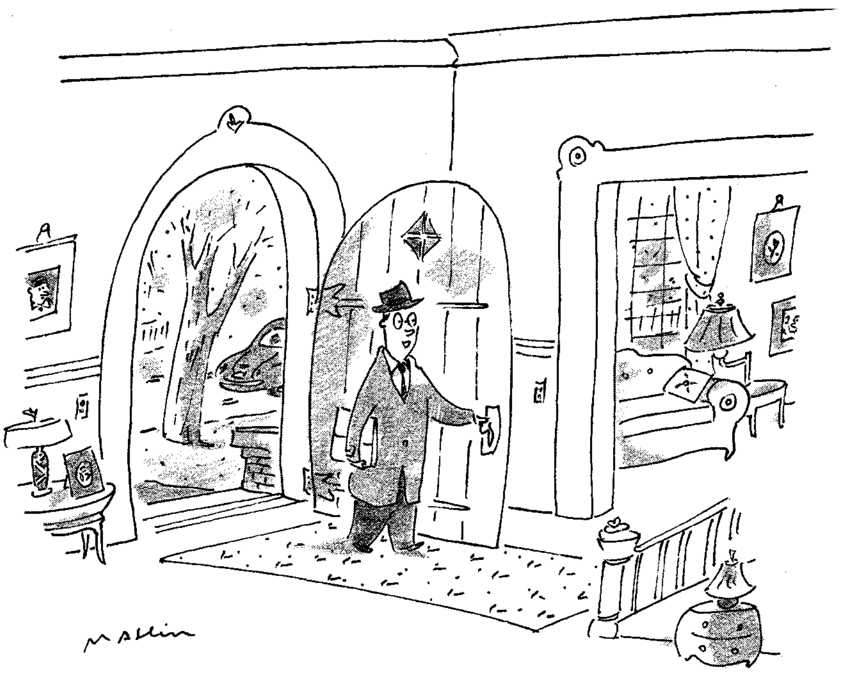


"Honey—I'm paroled!"

• •

Weiss, a scholar of post-colonial Congolese politics, sees it, "Kabila believed that the whole independence moment was stolen, and he now appears to be attempting to reclaim that moment."

Oddly, a number of recent reports have called Kabila's qualifications for leadership into question by noting that Che Guevara, who visited the Congo in 1965, found him wanting in Marxist-Leninist fervor—as if Che's regard had suddenly become a credential for statesmanship. The complaint seems to be that Kabila's ideology is unknown. In fact, he does not appear to be an ideologue. His political mentor was Patrice Lumumba, the nationalist leader and critic of Western imperialism, who was murdered, with the complicity of the C.I.A., in 1961. Lumumba's dream was that "Africa will write her own history," and that without Western meddling that history would be "glorious and dignified." The nightmare of Mobutism was maintained, in the end, largely by the support of France. Kabila's rebellion marks a bruising defeat for Paris on the world stage. Like his chief political allies, the leaders of Uganda and Rwanda, who are pragmatic advocates of national self-reliance, Kabila must now translate the liberation struggle from a fight against a corrupt old order into a fight for a new and exemplary model of governance.

No tidy line can be drawn between these two fights. Kabila calls himself a democrat, sometimes a social democrat, but he makes it clear, too, that he does not find the Congo to be ready as yet for the sort of speedy elections that the West insistently—but selectively—demands. Before inviting the disruption of elections, Kabila's government will need to help the Congo recover from having been Zaire. This can be accomplished not by forgetting Zaire but by creating a Congo that makes Zaire an incomparably bad memory.

A FEW days before Kabila's press conference last November, I went to Mobutu's lakeside palace in Goma. The gates stood open and unguarded. The Zairean flag lay in a lump in the driveway. Munitions abandoned by Mobutu's Special Presidential Division littered the grounds—heaps of assault rifles and cases marked "TNT" packed with sixty-millimetre mortar rounds. Five mint black Mercedes sedans, a shiny Land Rover, and two ambulances were parked by the garage. Inside, the house was a garish assemblage of mirrored ceilings, malachite-and-pearl-inlaid furniture, chandeliers, giant televisions, and elaborate hi-fis. Upstairs, the twin master bathrooms were equipped with Jacuzzis.

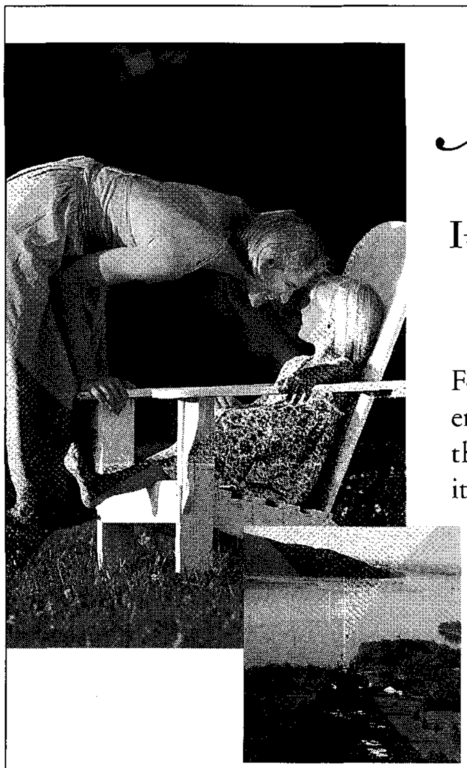
Goma is largely a shantytown. The poverty is extreme. Just after the rebel takeover, I had stopped by the house of a friend who had gone away, leaving his dogs. Their snouts stuck out beneath the locked gate. I was feeding them some United Nations high-protein biscuits when three men came around the corner and asked for some, too. I held out the box to the first man, who was clad in rags, and said, "Take a few." His hands shot out, and I felt the box fly from my grip as if it were spring-loaded. The man's companions immediately pounced on him, tussling, cramming biscuits into their mouths, snatching biscuits out of one another's mouths, and along what had seemed a deserted street more people came running to join the fray.

Mobutu's Jacuzzis were lined with bath oils and perfumes in bottles of Alice in Wonderland magnitude; they must have held about a gallon apiece. Most were quite full. But one appeared to have enjoyed regular use: a vat of Chanel's Égoïste. He bathed in the stuff.

That was Zaire.

As for the Congo: Last November, Kabila told me he expected to achieve his "ideal objective" of annexing Kinshasa, the capital, to his liberated zone "in less than a year." Hardly anybody believed him at the time. It had been widely assumed that the Congo would fall to pieces after Mobutu; that the people who lived within the map drawn by King Leopold shared no cohesive idea of an organic nation; that the territorial integrity of the place was in peril. But Kabila did it in six months, and he did not do it alone. Nationalists of all backgrounds, from every region of the country and from exile, rallied behind the rebel flag, and most of the countries that border the Congo also sent support.

Frantz Fanon, the theorist of post-colonial liberation struggles, wrote in "The Wretched of the Earth" that "the last battle of the colonized against the colonizer will often be the fight of the colonized against each other." The Congo is sure to see further battles; Kabila arrived in Kinshasa with some heavy debts, and his regime already faces significant domestic opposition. In a land where the history of political hope is a chronicle of quashed rebellions, failure could come quickly to the new government and success could take years. One measure will be whether the new order can restore to its people some of the immense promise of their restored name. That would, at last, give the Congolese something to defend. ♦



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A VISIT TO CAMELOT

The author was a guest at the legendary dinner that the Kennedys gave for the Nobel laureates in 1962—and at the private party that followed. Just before her death, she came across the account she had made of that night more than thirty years earlier.

BY DIANA TRILLING

HERE was Camelot as I saw it and described it to my friends. At breakfast one morning in April of 1962 I read in the *Times* that there was to be a dinner for the Nobel Prize winners. I said to my husband, Lionel, "Here we go again. Lenny Bernstein." The story indicated that there were going to be guests in addition to the Nobel laureates. I concluded that that meant Lenny Bernstein and Julie Harris. What I was having, of course, was a terrible pang of jealousy, because these were the people who would be invited, and we would not. But, even as I was saying it, a quick wonderful thought ran through my head that perhaps we were going to be invited. I said nothing to Lionel about wishing that we had an invitation, and if he was suffering from a similar jealousy he hid it from me, too. And then one morning when the mail arrived, and Lionel asked me to come out to the hall, I could tell from his voice what was in the mail: a large square envelope marked in the corner "The White House."

Actually, I was worried about the expense, but there was no question that we were going to accept. I had a strong, simple feeling about the invitation, and it struck a sympathetic chord in Lionel. My father had come to America from Poland when he was a boy of eighteen, without a penny, and knowing no English. He peddled macaroons on the Staten Island Ferry while he learned the language, and now for his daughter to be invited to the White House—well, I owed him the acceptance of that invitation.

The invitation was for a Sunday night, April 29th, and it said black tie. This made it perfectly clear what Lionel would wear, but what would I wear? With our old-fashioned notions, we decided that I should wear the simplest possible short evening dress, black, if I could find one, and covered up, not bare. I set out to find it, and there wasn't a short black evening dress in all New York. Then I called a salesgirl I knew at Hattie Carnegie and asked her what I could do. She was awfully pleasant and told me that she knew someone, Mac Weiss, who might have something for me at his shop. I went there, and I found not a short black evening dress at all but a black matte jersey dress with long tight sleeves. It was full-length, but I was shown how the trains could be cut off and it could be made into a short dress, which I could wear with short white kid gloves. The problem seemed to entrance them. In fact, at one point the salesgirl whispered, "Mrs. Auchincloss is right in the next fitting room at this moment." Jackie's mother, of course.

The dress was a slinky tight thing, very theatrical, and something told me not to buy it without consulting Lionel. So I asked them to hold it, and the next day I took Lionel down to look at it. He didn't think it was at all the right thing. This troubled Mr. Weiss very badly, and he said, "I think I have one other dress that you didn't see," and he brought out a simple black crêpe dress (that all my friends would be seeing for the next five years), with a little scarf attached to the shoulder which I could drop over my arms if I wanted them to be covered. And it made me look so thin—it was marvellous. It looked as if it had cost all of nineteen ninety-five, if you weren't aware of the cut. It was two hundred and fifty dollars. Mr. Weiss kept telling me how absolutely perfect it was, superb. Lionel was beaming, too. So this was how it was done, and I thought that I was all set and now all I had to worry about were the accessories.

And then that evening I picked up the *Times*, which I hadn't had a chance to read because I had been downtown shopping, and my eye lit on the social calendar of the Kennedys, and I saw that they were on their way to Palm Beach. They're going to Palm Beach, I thought furiously, and I'm going to their party, and they won't even be there. This impelled me to read the whole story, which said that they were going to be gone for ten days and then they would be back for the Nobel Prize winners' dinner on the twenty-ninth. And included in the news story were two sentences that, miraculously, I read: a directive had just that day been issued by the social office of the White House that although the party was to be on the black-tie level for men it was on the white-tie level for ladies. The women guests, that is, were to wear long gowns and long white gloves. I had just taken my new dress out of its box and cut off the price tag. Hung it in the closet. Made it mine. But what I had bought was dead wrong.

We had just one week left before the party when my then sister-in-law Edna dragged me to a shop on Forty-eighth Street. A nasty, vulgar saleswoman came forward to ask what I wanted. I said I was looking for a long evening dress, and she said that all the shop's clothes were made to order. I hadn't even the strength to say thank you when I heard Edna say, "Yes, of course, but we thought that perhaps at this time of year you might have some of your model dresses left which you'd be willing to sell." The saleswoman examined her appraisingly. "Yes, we do," she admitted. She disappeared for a few minutes and then brought out just the dress I had been looking for—an all-seasons dress, champagne-colored, made of moiré taffeta printed in soft orange and green flowers. I forced myself to ask "How much?" before trying it on. It was three hundred and ninety-five dollars, the saleswoman said, but since it was a model she might be able to do a little better on the price. Meanwhile,

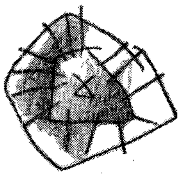
Mrs. Kennedy said, "Oh," as if to ask where I had materialized from. What was I doing in her conversation with Lionel?

Edna was making gestures at me behind her back, and I knew just what she was trying to say, so I took a large gulp and murmured, "I hope you'll be able to give me a special price on this, because I'm going to wear it at the White House." The salesgirl didn't blink an eye. She said, "Oh, then I'm sure we can do even better. Just try it on first." I tried it on, and there were a few little things that needed altering. She disappeared for a few minutes and when she returned she said patriotically that the price would be two hundred and fifty dollars, including the alterations.

All I had left to do was to have some slippers dyed to match. Edna had a lovely old evening bag that she lent me. She also lent me a mink stole. And I bought long white kid gloves that cost twenty-two dollars.

When Lionel first got our invitation, we had thought we might spend the whole weekend in Washington and stay at a hotel or motel. But our friend Thelma Anderson reminded us that she had a sister who lived just outside Washington, and who would be delighted to have us use her house to dress in. We welcomed that money-saving suggestion.

The twenty-ninth at last arrived, and we went down to Washington on the eleven-o'clock train. Dinner was scheduled for eight o'clock that evening, and we figured that that would give us plenty of time to get to Thelma's sister's house to dress without a rush. On our way down to Penn Station, we stopped at the Tip Toe Inn to buy sandwiches, to avoid the expense of the dining car. Lionel wanted to buy chairs in the club car, but I wouldn't let him. I was adamant: we would have a sleeper to come back in that night, but we would go down in a coach. So there we were, standing with a great big suitcase, in which were packed our evening clothes, and waiting for the gate to open, when suddenly a very seedy-looking man carrying a suitcase and a large raggedy bulging briefcase came up and asked, "Do you know where you get the eleven-o'clock train to Washington?" All of us did a doubletake. It was James Farrell.



Could there have been a more extraordinary sight? I thought of Yeats's "Fifteen apparitions have I seen; / The worst a coat upon a coat-hanger." He was wearing a suit that I think was supposed to be brown, but it was so shabby that you could no longer tell its color. His necktie was under his ear and a button was missing from his shirtfront. Also, the shirt was filthy; he'd been wearing it for a week. I may be exaggerating a little, but I think his jacket was torn on the sleeve and that its buttons were hanging by a thread. He looked wild. We hadn't seen him for ages, and it flashed through both our minds: My God, has he been invited to the White House, too? But an even worse thought was that we were going to have to ride all the way down to Washington with him, and it was going to be terrible. In fact, he'd already started to talk while we stood at the gate, and he was telling us that he'd begun Volume 19 in a series of twenty-five novels, not one of which had been published, and he quoted passages to us from the one he had just completed. In his bulging briefcase, he explained, he had all the royalty statements from his publishers. He felt that he was being very much cheated by the income-tax people, and he was going to Washington to take up the matter. I could hear Lionel heave a sigh of relief: he wasn't going to the White House; he was going to the Treasury Department.

He looked insane, sober but insane, but he couldn't have been sweeter. Well, this was what I got for not allowing Lionel to buy chairs in the club car. We were going to have to ride all the way to Washington with Jim Farrell! The gates finally opened, and Lionel and I started down the platform. We hadn't, of course, said anything about where we were going in Washington. When we got to the first coach car, we turned toward it, and he looked at us, surprised. "Oh, don't you have chairs?" Embarrassed, he explained that he was terribly sorry but he hadn't been sleeping well lately and was very tired. He had taken a chair because it would give him a chance to rest. I could feel humiliation racing through every inch of my husband's body. He was riding in a coach while this poor, bedraggled devil who looked as if he had not had a bed to sleep in for a year or a change in underwear for a month was travelling in a chair. But it was also a great relief; we wouldn't have to talk to him.

On the train, I'd begun to have a headache. I was well fortified with pills: aspirin, Bufferin, codeine, and also some pink pills that had been given me by the English novelist Pamela Hansford Johnson, the wife of C. P. Snow. We'd met at a dinner party, where I'd suddenly become ill and had to leave. She had followed me to the door and said, "You're having an attack of migraine, aren't you? I can tell. I'm vice-president of the British Migraine Association. Here!" And she thrust a couple of pills into my hand. Of course, only in England could there be a migraine association. I asked what the pills were, and she said that when you have the aura of a migraine you take the first pill and, twenty minutes later, if you're not better you take a second pill. She had only two to spare. But they were marvellous, and really worked, and I had written to ask her to send me more. So on the train, when I got the aura, as she put it, I took one of them. As soon as I'd swallowed it, I got nervous: suppose I passed out in the middle of the dinner party? My headache was becoming quite severe, and I was alarmed because, if it followed its usual pattern, by eight o'clock I'd be very sick, and by nine I'd be throwing up. I dressed in agony. I was beginning to feel so sick and nervous that I couldn't bear the idea of trying to get through a party.

I had learned from an acquaintance that protocol required us to arrive at the White House by ten minutes to eight. At Thelma's sister Marilyn's house, Lionel asked where he could call for a hired car. But Marilyn and her husband wouldn't dream of letting us hire a car; they insisted that they themselves would drive us to the White House. It would be a forty-five-minute drive, and we protested vehemently, but they assured us that it would be fun for them, so at precisely ten minutes after seven we all piled into their station wagon, our host in his shirtsleeves, Marilyn in a housedress, the baby in the dirty play clothes she'd been wearing. The three of them got in the front of the car while Lionel and I arranged ourselves elegantly in the back. And I looked at Lionel and Lionel looked at me, and it was perfectly clear that the two of us were thinking the same thing: Arriving like this, we wouldn't be allowed through the gate. Why couldn't our driver at least put on a jacket?

Still, we sat back and relaxed, and it suddenly came to me that my headache was all gone, and almost for the first time that day it occurred to me that I might even enjoy the evening. It was dusk, the fountains were playing, with lights on them. It had been a warm week in Washington, and flowers had burst into bloom on the White House grounds, so that you saw masses of color in the lowering light. People were beginning to gather to watch what was going on. It was like nothing I had ever witnessed, and it made my heart pound with excitement.

"My bedroom? You're sitting on it."

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We drove up to the gate, and there was a row of Army and Navy people. Lionel handed his pass to a guard, and he received it without the slightest flicker of expression. He just checked off our names on a list and said, turning to Marilyn's husband, "Drive right up to the door." There we said, "Thank you so much for everything," and off they drove.

I took Lionel's arm. It was plainly indicated what we were supposed to do; nobody needed to tell us. Very slowly we walked through the portico. The entrance was lined on both sides with functionaries. There were also a great many military people in attendance, in their beautiful uniforms, and heaps of photographers taking pictures of the guests as they arrived, not asking their names; the sorting out would be done later. They took everybody's picture.

As we walked in, an aide came up and said, "The gentlemen please enter in that room, the ladies go to the dressing room, around to the right." In the dressing room, there were several maids and racks and racks of clothes, the women's wraps, and lavatories with mirrors, not unlike the dressing room on the mezzanine level of the Plaza Hotel, in New York, but bigger. The moment I got in there, I knew it was going to be a wonderful party. There were two or three elderly women fixing their hair in front of the mirrors, and they beamed at me. One of them said, "Have you come far?" and I said, "From New York. Have you come far?" She replied that she had driven in the rain from Baltimore; I suppose it was from Johns Hopkins. They were wearing the most marvellous antique dresses, this little group of old ladies. One of them might have been eighty. She had on a taffeta dress with ruching around the neck and puffed sleeves. She looked exquisite, with beautiful jewelry that had probably been in her family forever. Nothing could have been a more wonderful introduction to the party than these women: they weren't young, they weren't smart—they were just lovely.

I came out of the dressing room, and there was Lionel, waiting for me. Immediately an aide came up, introduced himself, and inquired, "May I ask your name?" When Lionel said, "Mr. and Mrs. Trilling," he said promptly, "Of course. Mr. and Mrs. Lionel Trilling." Obviously, he had memorized the entire guest list—I think there were about a hundred and eighty of us altogether—and he couldn't have known in advance who was going to fall to him. Then he said to me, "Would you take my arm?" and held out his arm while Lionel fell back and walked two or three paces behind us. As we moved along, he asked me, "Does your husband prefer to be introduced as Mr., Dr., or Professor?" "He prefers to be called Mr. Trilling," I said. "Good," he said, and added, "I'll be your aide for the early part of the evening. You'll be told everything you have to do, so you needn't feel any constraint at all."

While he was talking to me, I saw that perhaps five yards ahead of us another couple was being ministered to in the same comforting fashion. There must have been eighteen or twenty such aides, each in charge of eight to ten people. But there was no pressure of any kind. Just the contrary.

He led me to a table, and an attendant checked a list and handed him a little envelope, saying, "Mr. Trilling will be seated at Table 2. You, Mrs. Trilling, will be seated at Table 6. You're both in the main dining room. This evening, we're going to be using both dining rooms, the State Dining Room and the Blue Room. President Kennedy will be in the State Dining Room, where your

SHARDS
WOODMAN

tables are. Mrs. Kennedy will be in the Blue Room." The pre-dinner reception was being held in the East Room, and at the door stood another attendant, with a microphone. Our aide went up to him and said, "Mr. and Mrs. Lionel Trilling," and the aide at the door repeated into the microphone, "Mr. and Mrs. Lionel Trilling." From then on, I kept catching the names of people who were arriving and being announced. I'd have loved to be standing quietly by myself, listening to the names and trying to put them together with the faces to which they belonged, but that wasn't possible. My aide had returned and deposited us where Lionel and I belonged alphabetically, or near enough to it for easy correction. He took me up to Fredric March and introduced us. Like many accomplished actors, March had very smooth manners. He greeted me warmly. Then a kind of chain reaction got started in the reception room. One didn't speak to anyone without introducing him or her to the person with whom one had just been speaking. It just seemed to happen automatically: we caught the procedure from the aides and carried it forward without being told to. It was the most enchanting performance, everybody introducing somebody to somebody else in the most charming way.

Immediately the room began to fill with waiters carrying huge trays loaded with everything that one could possibly desire to drink: Manhattans, Martinis, highballs, sherry, tomato juice, orange juice. There were no canapés—just drinks.

The room was now filling up with familiar names. Not familiar faces. I soon heard the attendant announce, "Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Schlesinger." Arthur saw me and waved and came over. He greeted me and introduced his wife, but he didn't seem relaxed and friendly, like everyone else. He appeared to be self-conscious, as if borne down by his official White House connection.

Meanwhile, out of the corner of my eye I had spotted Colonel John Glenn. He was talking to, of all people, Robert Frost, and there must have been six people huddled around them, trying to hear what they were saying. And then a little lady, just a wee thing, and the most enchanting-looking person, was being introduced to me—she looked to be about eighty-five, and her name was Mrs. Waterman. Later, I found out that her husband was in charge of the National Science Foundation. She said to me, "Oh, Mrs. Trilling, you're literary. Is there anyone here I'm supposed to know?"

She had a charming birdlike way of speaking, and I said, "Well, I haven't seen many writers, but that's Katherine Anne Porter over there in the white brocade dress and the white hair and the white pearls."

"Am I supposed to know her?" Mrs. Waterman inquired. "Because I don't want to."

I was dying for a cigarette, but I didn't see any woman smoking, and very few men were smoking. My headache was gone, but I was still afraid to drink, because that might bring it back. I held a cocktail in my hand, but I didn't dare touch it. A stupendous amount of liquor was flowing around. People felt so much at home that they were drinking just as they might at a cocktail party at the home of their closest friends. Bill Styron lit a cigarette, but I didn't myself dare to, so he kept giving me puffs of his.

Then suddenly I heard over the loudspeaker the name of Mr. James Farrell, and, sure enough, there he was. I don't know in whose charge he had been in those intervening hours since we had last seen him, but he was transformed. He had on an absolutely clean shirt, his suit was pressed and sparkling clean, every shirt stud was in place. He looked dreamy, and I felt horribly ashamed of us for not having wanted to tell him that we were going to the White House and asking whether that was where he was going, too. What was amazing was that he had had the delicacy not to ask us, for fear that we hadn't been invited and would feel bad.

Jimmy Baldwin looked elegant in his evening clothes, and we just waved to each other across the room. I caught a glimpse of John Dos Passos in the reception room, but I didn't see him again through the rest of the evening. With Frost, that about made up the literary contingent. I took note that Lionel was drinking an awful lot of Martinis. But he was obviously enjoying himself. Long before we were put into the receiving line and the President made his appearance, everybody was saying to everybody else, "Isn't this a wonderful party?"

By now it must have been half past eight. Our aide explained that the President and Mrs. Kennedy were about to come in, and as soon as they did the receiving line would start moving forward.

Everyone would be in alphabetical order, with the Nobel Prize winners first, and then the other guests. "Please don't lose your places," he urged. "That's very important. The gentleman goes in front of the lady in the receiving line." He turned to Lionel. "We mean that."

At that moment, there was a great fanfare of trumpets—quite literally—and the band played "Hail to the Chief." Then in marched the color guard, and I heard a voice say, "The President and Mrs. Kennedy," and in they came, into the sudden stillness. They didn't come in slowly, or in any way regally. They moved almost hastily, as if they didn't want to be specially noticed. It's true that there had been the big fanfare for the entrance, but then, as individuals, they comported themselves with great modesty.

They had just come back from the Palm Beach vacation, and they were very suntanned. Jackie was a deep cocoa brown and she was wearing a sea-green chiffon dress, to the floor, but cut very simply except that it had one bare shoulder. She wore green slippers to match her dress and no jewelry at all except some earrings, which were the most beautiful shade of green. She was a hundred times more beautiful than any photograph had ever indicated.

In photographs, her head always looked too large. But it wasn't at all that large when you saw her in real life. She didn't have as bouffant a hairdo as I thought from her pictures, and she had a long and perfectly beautiful neck. Her dress really wasn't cut very elaborately, but it had millions of pleats. Hers was a charming figure rather than a perfect one, and she carried her clothes exquisitely. The President was handsome and exuded energy—I could feel it even at my distance from him. And one thing I noticed right away: among the Nobel Prize winners he had apparently changed the alphabetical order, so that the line was headed by Mrs. George Marshall, the widow of General Marshall—of the Marshall Plan. She was followed by Mrs. Ernest Hemingway, who had on what I thought was the most beautiful and appropriate dress at the party. After all, it was less than a year since Hemingway's death. She knew that she was going to be very much in the public eye. It was a black sheath, very tight to below her knees, where it went out in a flare, and the flared part had large crimson roses appliquéed on it—she was essentially in black but not in mourning. I should perhaps say here that I'd often seen pictures of her and had always thought she looked like a lady buyer, hard-bitten. But, actually, there was more tenderness in her face than I had expected; more pain. Her eyes were softer, more appealing, and the whole outline of her face was more blurred than was suggested in photographs.

The line began to move quite rapidly now, but people didn't stop drinking until they came to within a few feet of the President. Then they set down their drinks—there were lots of shelves and little tables around the sides of the room. There were a few chairs scattered about, but nobody used them; everyone was in motion. By the time Lionel and I got to the President, the room was, of course, almost empty. Lionel moved out ahead of me. He had already put out his hand while his name was being announced, so that he had the President's hand in his and the President was saying, "It's very nice to see you, sir," when Lionel's name fully got through to him.

"Oh, it's you," the President exclaimed. "I'm so glad to see you." Lionel beamed, of course, and said, "Thank you." By this time, Mrs. Kennedy had her hand out and Lionel was taking it. And she said, "You know, I have a stepsister who won't have one idea in her head unless you tell her it's all right to have it. She never says anything unless you say it's all right for her to say it."

Lionel inquired who the stepsister was.

"Nina Auchincloss," Mrs. Kennedy replied. "She was a student of yours."

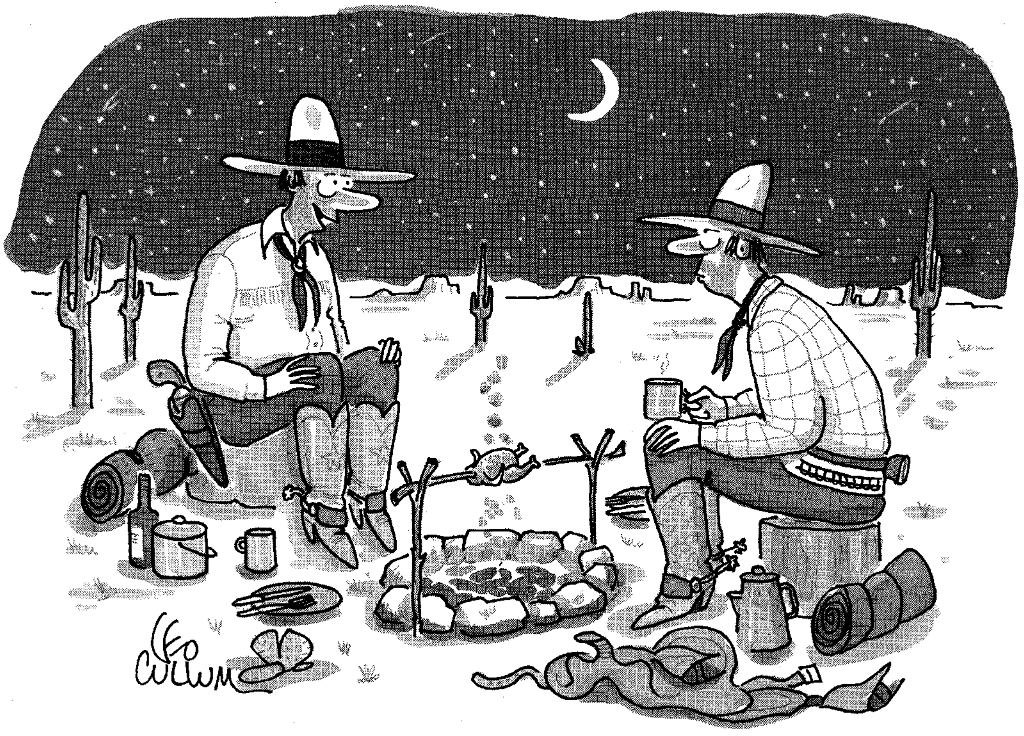
Lionel couldn't place Nina Auchincloss, but he said, "That's very nice of her." But he didn't stop there. I could see that he wasn't being his usual shy self—he had had six Martinis, I'd been counting. And I thought, Oh, my God, what's coming next? He was still holding Mrs. Kennedy's hand. "Wait till I tell you what they said about you at Vassar," he said, smiling at her.

She began to laugh. "What?"

"Never mind," said Lionel. "Later, I'll tell you later."

At this point, the President dropped my hand and inquired of Lionel, "What did they say at Vassar?"

"Later," Lionel repeated. I had myself now been moved on to Mrs. Kennedy, but I saw that both the President and



"Hickory smoke—that's what gives it that hearty Western flavor."

Mrs. Kennedy were grinning; they were amused by Lionel.

I said, "Don't worry. What they said was very nice."

Mrs. Kennedy said, "Oh," but she looked at me as if to ask where I had materialized from. What was I doing in her conversation with Lionel? Lionel and I moved together toward the dining room, and he said, "I'm going to die—I've never been so flattered in my whole life."

IN the dining room, we separated. I went to my Table 6, Lionel went to his Table 2. The tables were round, quite close to each other. The President's table was in the center, and he had Mrs. Marshall on his right and Mrs. Hemingway on his left. Frost was at the President's table, and so was Mrs. Smith, the President's sister. While people were coming into the dining room, I had been able to look at the place cards at my table. I had Pierre Salinger on my right. On my left was a Dr. Stanley. On the other side of Dr. Stanley was a woman I'd been talking to in the reception room, a very charming and handsome woman with a great deal of social poise. Her name was Mrs. Stratton, and I think she was the wife of the president of M.I.T. I asked her if she had any idea who Dr. Stanley was, and she told me that he had done important work on viruses. She added that Mrs. Kerr, whose husband was president of the University of California, and who was also sitting at our table, would be able to tell me all about him. I looked at the cards and saw that sitting on the other side of Mrs. Kerr would be James Baldwin. That was a relief to me and apparently to him, too, because when he got to the table and saw me there he said, "Oh, you're here. Thank God, a familiar face."

The first thing Jimmy did was to look at the card next to him. The place was still empty. "Who is Mrs. Kerr?" he asked me. "Didn't she write a book, 'Please Don't Eat the Daisies'?" I shook my head. "Wife of the president of the University of California."

Soon Salinger came in, and Dr. Stanley, and we all sat until the President came in, and then we all stood up again. It was plain that he was trying not to draw too much attention to himself: he walked in rapidly and sat down right away, no airs about it.

Dr. Stanley picked up my card. I said, "You haven't the vaguest idea who I am. You scientists don't read." He loved my introducing myself that way. He spent the entire dinner trying to persuade me to stop smoking, telling me in horrendous detail about the cancer I was heading into, and how I was going to rot inch by inch. It was so relaxed in the dining room that I was able to smoke through the entire meal. Nearly everybody was smoking, including most of the women. But Dr. Stanley kept taking my cigarette out of my mouth.

At one moment, he said, "What am I doing this for? I haven't been able to stop my own wife from smoking. Why am I trying to stop you? She's so nervous it's probably better for her to smoke than not to." Of course, we were all tight. Everybody was tight.

Everybody at the table was having fun except the two of us on either side of Salinger. I must have launched fifty topics of talk, all of which fizzled out. Nothing we said to each other involved more than two sentences: my remark, his answer. Then we'd have to start all over again. Eventually, I found it interesting that it was so dull with him.

The dinner was delicious. The meal had been much delayed, yet the beef was absolutely perfect. The wines were French, and there was no end to the amount you could drink: you had barely set down your glass before it was filled again. With the dessert came champagne.

When the champagne was served, the President rose at his place and knocked on his glass. The dining room became instantly quiet while he made the tiniest bit of a speech. He said, "This is the most extraordinary collection of talent, of human knowledge, that has ever gathered together at the White House, with the possible exception of when Thomas Jefferson dined alone."

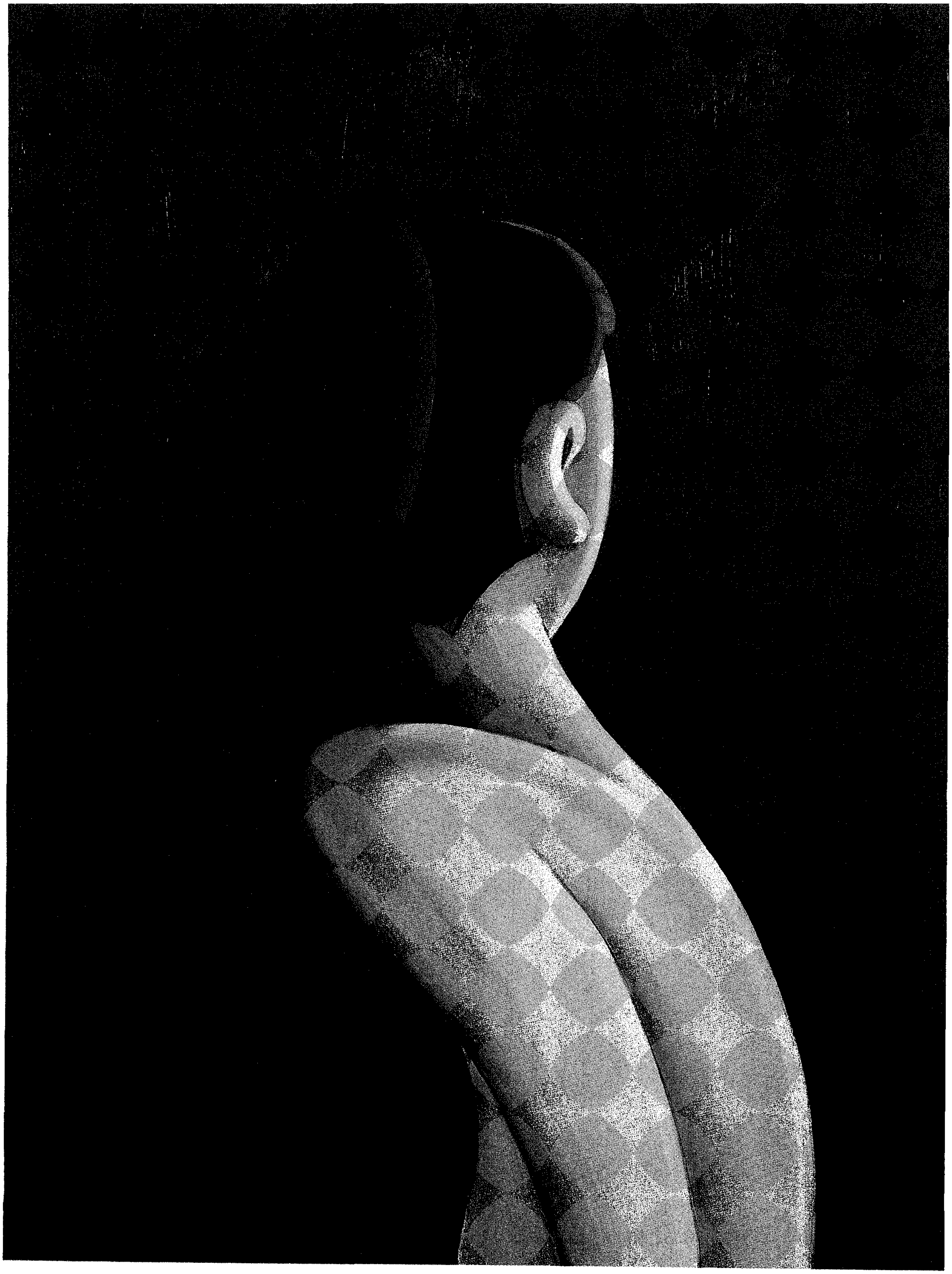
He at once had the place in his hands; everyone adored it. He added a few other words and sat down. Coffee was served right at the table, and suddenly even Pierre Salinger became human. He said to me, "Cigars are moving slowly. If the President rises before they get to me, I won't have one. But I know all these waiters, and I'm not worried—they'll bring me a cigar."

The President rose, and everyone else rose, too. He moved out of the room, stopping as he went to shake hands with friends as he chanced to see them. And then the old fraternization started all over again. People moved around talking to one another as they left the dining room, moving into the corridors, where strolling strings were playing. We had been instructed that there would be a short interval after the dinner, and that, after that, there would be a reading by Fredric March. But now we had about a half hour in which President and Mrs. Kennedy had retired—he had to catch his breath, and I guess she needed some time to herself as well. But the party continued on its own momentum.

Coming into the dining room we had run into Dr. and Mrs. J. Robert Oppenheimer. They were just ahead of us, and he turned and said, "You don't know my wife, do you?" She was a lovely-looking woman. Lovely but agonized-looking. My heart ached for the two of them. It was such a nice gesture on the part of President Kennedy, wanting publicly to rehabilitate Oppenheimer after he had been treated as a security risk for nearly a decade. But his appearance was like that of a spectre, a memento mori. He carried himself with great dignity, but that only made it worse. I remembered having heard that his wife was an acute alcoholic and drug addict. What a strain it must have been for her, with so much

HAIRPIN CURVES

The formal contours in Chuck Agro's new portraits call to mind the Russian Constructivists' early, clunky paintings of peasants, pieced together from cones and rhomboids. Yet the tranquillity is deceptive: the curves of the woman in "Turning Away," at first glance so pure and decorative, are actually the outlines of turbulent emotion. Agro, a young painter from upstate New York, recently found himself in love again after a period of desolation, and these new paintings (on exhibit at the Earl McGrath Gallery, through June 11th) are the result. Here he has rendered the subject's flesh as a familiar landscape, one contemplated so often and so intently that it begins to seem alien, even threatening. What would this woman say—what would her face show us—if we reached out and tapped that shell-like shoulder?



riding on the evening for him and all that liquor around.

Everywhere I looked there were enormous vases of flowers. The White House was like a fairyland—everything so elegant, easy, and gay, and the colors soft and varied. Wherever there was a table or a shelf or a fireplace, there were magnificent flowers in soft arrangements.

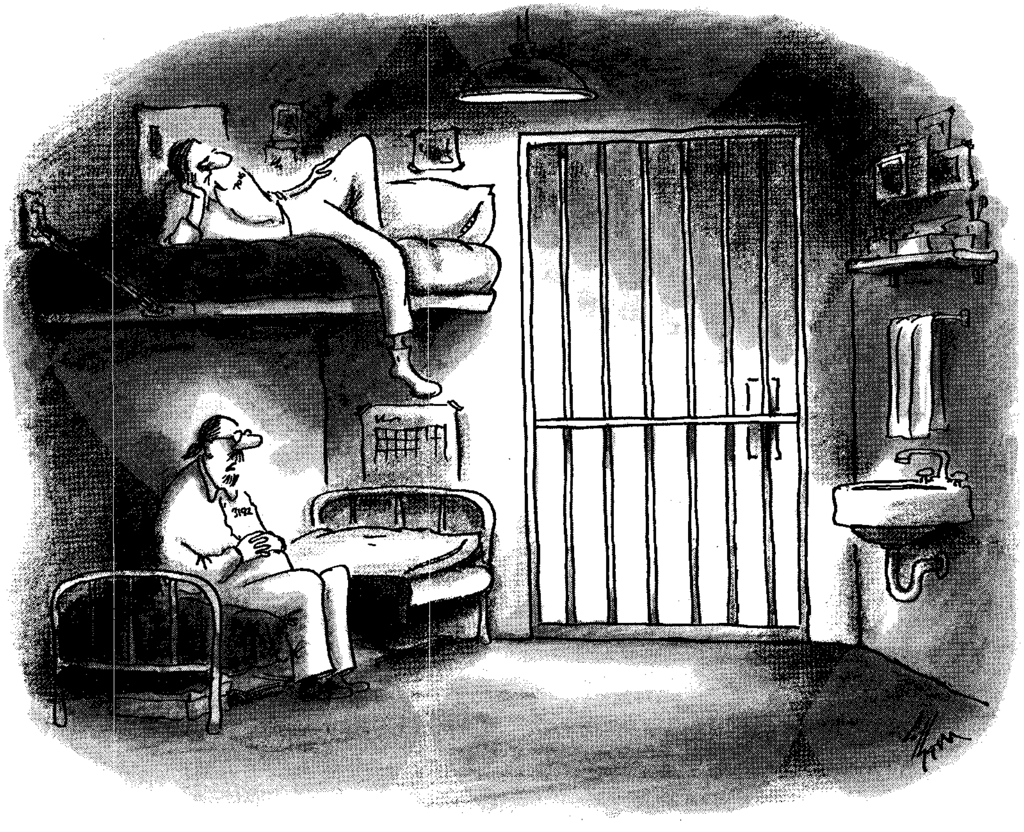
My aide gave me his arm and said, "Wouldn't you like to come into the East Room now and take your place? There's to be a reading. I want you to have a good seat, so let's go in now." He seated us plunk in the center of the third row. The President and Mrs. Kennedy had already come in and were seated right in front of us, where we could see them. They were in armchairs; we were in little gold chairs. And there was Mrs. Marshall and Mrs. Hemingway and Robert Frost and Vice-President and Mrs. Lyndon Johnson, all in the row in front of us with the President. Throughout the evening, no notice had been taken of Johnson's entrance or his presence. I'd seen them, of course. Mrs. Johnson looked old and tired in that lively company. And Johnson himself had on the most awful dinner jacket. I think it was gray, and I don't know what it was made of, but it seemed to shimmer, as if he were a master of ceremonies in some cheap night club. Bobby Kennedy and his wife and the President's sister, Mrs. Smith, were also sitting in the front row just ahead of us. One of the things that struck me was Bobby Kennedy's good looks. He was infinitely better-looking than the President, but he didn't exude anything like his brother's power. Everything in his appearance was more delicate, and he looked very young, like an undergraduate. The President's face, on the other hand, radiated strength, power so compressed that you felt it was about to explode.

Fredric March read from three dead Nobel Prize winners, beginning with the introduction to Sinclair Lewis's "Main Street." Next came some excerpts from Marshall's outline for what was to become his famous plan. Very handsome, very traditionally worded. The final reading was from Hemingway. March said, "I was going to read Ernest Hemingway's 'The Killers,' but Mrs. Hemingway felt that we were all of us too familiar with that, and that perhaps you would like to hear something that had been unpublished, so she went through her husband's unpublished works and selected a chapter from an unpublished novel."

This was intriguing, and he read it very well. But the chapter itself was so poor that one was pained for the man who had written it. When March finished, the President rose from his chair and walked over to Mrs. Hemingway; he virtually lifted her out of her seat and had her bow to the audience. She was having a tough time, poor woman, and I saw the President do something so nice. He squeezed her arm comfortingly. Then he went back to sit in his own place again.

During the reading, I had been sitting next to Katherine Anne Porter. She acted in the most annoying fashion. She fussed with her necklace, she fussed with her earrings, she fussed with every curl in her beautiful white hair. She had apparently spotted a woman who had kept her long gloves on, so she again put her own gloves on. Then she spotted a woman whose gloves were off and once more removed her own gloves. Then she saw someone who had only one glove on, and she copied that. In the meanwhile, she was telling me how her life was being ruined by success—she was so hounded by newspaper people that she couldn't get any work done. What she needed that evening was the undeviating attention of a naval aide. She was used to being made much of by men; she must have felt rather frighteningly alone.

EVERYBODY now stood up. No one actually rushed to the exit, but everyone sort of started to move in that direction. Lionel went over to talk to Robert Frost, but Lyndon Johnson moved in ahead of him, so Lionel waited. I stood at his side, waiting with him until Johnson had finished. After Lionel and Frost had talked for a moment, we moved toward the door. But just then I saw our aide approaching. "The President would like it very much if you and Mr. Trilling would join him upstairs," he said. By this time, I felt as if anything could happen, and I was scarcely surprised. Hadn't Lionel said that he'd tell him about Jackie



"If the jury had been sequestered in a nicer hotel, this would probably never have happened."

DREAMS EROTIC, DREAMS NOT

The sheet was pulled tight
across, each corner snapped
in a steel crease. The light
bounced on the pasty
afternoon and drenched the ceiling.
It was a theological dream.
Each perceptible languor
each conciliatory bark
each visitation
was implied in the sheet
and its contour
like a desert with a bowl of fire at
the center.
The going was rough:
back and forth
or simply incontestable balking.

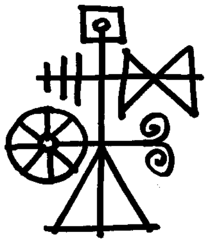
—NED O'GORMAN

at Vassar later? And it was only eleven o'clock—why should we go home? The party was just beginning.

Actually, I've never been a less important feature in our shared social life. I had nothing to do with this occasion except as Lionel's wife. Obviously, the President and Mrs. Kennedy knew who Lionel was. Most educated people were acquainted with Lionel's name, just as they knew the names of Katherine Anne Porter and James Baldwin. These were literary celebrities. But did they read the serious intellectual journals and know that I was a writer, too? I didn't have to ponder the answer. It was no. The Styrons knew my work. So did Katherine Anne Porter and Farrell and Jimmy Baldwin. But neither of the Kennedys had ever heard of me, of that I'm almost certain. But I didn't let myself dwell on that aspect of the evening. I was delighted for Lionel, and I was enjoying myself thoroughly.

As my migraine had disappeared, I had drunk several glasses of champagne. I had even sipped some of the wines at dinner. I hadn't had six Martinis, like Lionel—Lionel couldn't have been more pleasantly looped, perfect. Pretty soon, we were led into a large empty room, and the aide said, "This is the Oval Room. President Eisenhower worked here. The Kennedys don't use it that way; they use it for informal entertaining." There was a sofa in the middle of the room and another at right angles to it, and there were lots of occasional chairs grouped around the sofas very attractively, with little tables and lamps. There were flowers everywhere. The aide who led me in picked out a chair for me. He said that I ought to sit in that chair because it was the color of my dress. I asked if I could smoke. He said, "Of course," and he brought me an ashtray.

Immediately there sprang up before us, as if out of the ground, a waiter with a tray of full champagne glasses. I took a glass and then my aide said, "Just make yourself at home. The President will be here as soon as he's free downstairs. Have a good time." Lionel and I were now alone, sitting in the Oval Room of the White House, and we just looked at each other as though to say, "What in the world are we doing here?" We could scarcely talk to each other. We felt as if we were in a daydream.



At that moment, an aide came in with Rose Styron; a few paces behind them was Bill. They had the same mixed look of pleasure and bewilderment that we did. Rose and Bill struck me as being far more relaxed people than Lionel and I, but they weren't finding it much easier to talk; the whole situation was so extraordinary.

Then suddenly several people were led in. Robert Frost came in with Mrs. Smith, Bobby Kennedy came in with his wife, Ethel. Then Mrs. Kennedy came in in a bit of a bustle. She was holding a glass of champagne in her left hand and she said, "Oh, hello." Lionel had sat down on one of the sofas, and I was sitting in a velvet chair next to it. Totally ignoring the Kennedys, Mrs. Kennedy came straight across the room to Lionel. They didn't count in *her* life, and she didn't care who knew it. The men had of course risen when she came into the room, and Rose Styron and I got up as well. There was a wooden chair, sort of in back of the sofa, and she pulled it out—it was a little wooden armchair—and she said, "Every time Lyndon Johnson sits on this chair, he breaks it. He's broken it three times so far. Now watch me. I'm going to sit on it, and, you'll see, it won't break under me. He doesn't know how to sit." She had brought the chair right next to Lionel and now she sat down in it, next to him.

"Now," she looked up at Lionel as he sat down once more. "What did they say about me at Vassar?"

Lionel laughed and replied, "They said that you were a serious student. A very devoted student. And quite shy."

Jackie repeated after him, "Shy. Yes, I am shy."

Lionel said, "I'm shy, too." She looked at him, and they both burst out laughing. She knew that he was teasing her, and she liked it. I heard her say then, "Do you know who was here tonight?" And they began talking, and the conversation between them continued for the rest of the evening. Jackie's basic courtesy is sharply developed, and until a man came and sat down to talk specifically to me she was careful to try to guide some of her conversation with Lionel to include me. It's learned courtesy, totally conscious, not imperilled by champagne. But, once I was engaged in a conversation of my own, she fully directed herself to Lionel and never once gave a sign of having any interest in anyone else.

Not long after Jackie came in, the President came in, and with him were the Under-Secretary of Defense and the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs. We were fourteen or fifteen people altogether, and I began to understand that having this gathering in the Oval Room, although it included the President's family and some government people, was really Jackie's personal part of the evening. She had done her duty as a hostess, gone through the whole official occasion, and now it was her turn to have fun. In fact, I somehow had the impression that these little gatherings upstairs had become a kind of routine after large formal dinners, the price she demanded for having played her public part as conscientiously as she did.

And I felt the Kennedys had to accept Jackie's terms, because they realized that, for instance, the whole occasion we were having and the way the White House looked and how it ran were her doing—and this was not to mention the response of the public to her charm. She was their billion-dollar asset, and they were far too clever not to recognize it.

When Jackie first came into the room, she had pointed to a wooden rocker and said, "There's one in every room in the house. They're eyesores, aren't they?" She was referring to the rocker that was ordered for the President by his woman physician for his bad back. Jackie called it the President's health rocker and she said, "Do you know how much money is being made out of this? Do you know how many thousands of these rockers have been sold?"

At one moment, when there was a lull in the room and I thought that somebody ought to say something, I asked Jackie, "Did you have a good time on your trip?" I didn't mean her Palm Beach trip, and she understood that I meant a previous tour that she had been on. She looked at me and began a little smile, her eyes twinkling. She said, "I had a lovely time," and she said it in a tone that made it plain to me that she was repeating an official statement and that she hadn't had a good time at all.

At another point, she said something fairly startling about Khrushchev. In Vienna, a year earlier, she sat next to him at a state banquet. "I was sick with nervousness," she said. "I didn't know what I could talk about with him, and I kept asking Jack, 'What shall I say to him? What do I talk about?' I kept sitting there wondering what would be an innocent subject of conversation, and I decided to talk about animals. I said, 'I just love Russian dogs.' I asked him to send me one, and he did. Jack was furious with me for giving him such a diplomatic advantage." It was a marvellous story, but if it had got to the newspapers it would have been embarrassing for the President. "I still have that dog," she said. "It's around the White House grounds. But the problem is what to do with him. I want to mate him, but I haven't another Russian dog to mate him with, so I'd have to mate him with an American dog. I've been working on it, and I've been told that it won't take: a Russian dog and an American dog won't mate."

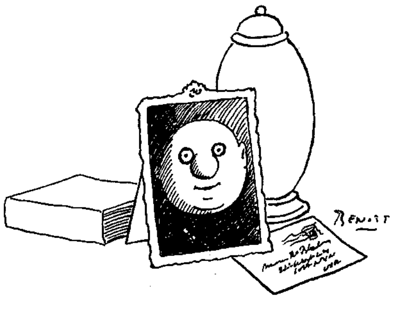
The President approached Lionel and pulled his chair—rocker—so close to him that they were really knee to knee.

"Well, what did they say about her at Vassar?" he asked Lionel.

Not at all awed, Lionel replied quietly, "They said that she was serious, a devoted student, a good student, shy." Jackie was just sitting there, watching Lionel's face.

"Shy, hmm," said the President. Nobody laughed; they were speaking quietly. I had the impression that the President was not thinking at all about Jackie or whether she had been shy at Vassar. He was looking at Lionel very sharply indeed. In teasing the President's wife, was he being impertinent to the President? Was he, in fact, that self-assured, and, if so, why? Was his report a literal report of what had been said to him about Jackie? From the answer to these questions the President would know how to place Lionel. All he said was "Linus Pauling was a lot of trouble today. He kept Caroline awake." And he told the famous story about how Caroline couldn't take her nap because of the noise on the picket line. "I don't mind his picketing the White House, but why does he have to picket right under the nursery window and keep the children awake?"

Then he got up from his rocker. He'd had his conversation with the Trillings, and now he moved on to somebody else. He joined the group around Frost, where the members of his family were seated. Then, sure enough, he went to a corner with Bobby and Salinger and the Inter-American Affairs man. It was plain that they were talking shop, and that for him the party was over. Jackie, however, was still having her party.



I could hear that Jackie had started to talk to Lionel about D. H. Lawrence. She said, "Is it true that 'The Rainbow' is Lawrence's best book?"

Lionel said, "Some people may think so. Myself, I think 'Women in Love' is better. What makes you think it's 'The Rainbow'?"

"I was reading Compton Mackenzie's memoirs. He knew all of Lawrence's work, and he said that he thought 'The Rainbow' was his best book." She added quickly, "Oh, I'm not sure I have that right. I think he said it was 'The Rainbow.' Wait a minute." She jumped up and ran to the next room, which seemed to be a library, returning with the book in her hand. She leafed through it and quickly found the place—she knew how to handle books, how to find what she wanted in them. "Here it is," she said, and she read it aloud, and it was "The Rainbow" that Mackenzie had been praising. Lionel repeated that although he preferred "Women in Love" "The Rainbow" was a great novel, and they kept on talking about Lawrence and about other writers. Jackie spoke very openly and unpretentiously, including her stepsister Nina in her conversation—Lionel had said he hadn't remembered her and wanted to be reminded. She spoke very charmingly, and said that she herself had wanted to audit one of Lionel's classes. She said Nina had been so insistent about being a student of Lionel's that she had almost made the family move to New York for just that reason. But Nina hadn't been accepted as a student; she had just audited his classes. She had been getting more and more pregnant. As soon as the baby was born, she had it in mind to go to Columbia and audit courses with Lionel three times a week.

I think it was here that I asked her in what way they were stepsisters. She assured me that she could never explain to anybody how her family worked, that everybody in it was a stepsister or stepbrother to everybody else. "There have been so many marriages in every part of the family—at Christmas it's a shambles. You don't know whom you have to send a card to, you don't know who your relatives really are."

Through all of this she was very open, in a crisp, modern manner: very sure of herself and reliant on her own wit. But she must have made reference to her husband no fewer than a dozen times—how Jack had been very angry at her, how Jack had told her to stop reading in bed and put out the light. While Lionel was telling the President what they had said about Jackie at Vassar, Jackie herself kept looking at her husband, but with a deliberately blank expression.

"You. You. And you."

• •

WE somehow knew that the party was over. She wanted it to continue, you could see that. She and Lionel were getting on so splendidly—Lionel really liked her, and she really liked him. It was now twelve-thirty.

The President was standing, and we all rose to leave. We all went over to him and shook hands with him, and I found myself saying what a lovely party it had been, and thank you very much, just as I would to any ordinary host. I had already said good night to Mrs. Kennedy and told her what a charming party it had been. I heard Lionel say to her, "I think you deserve great credit for this evening, everybody had such a wonderful time." She said, "You see, we used to have to come to the White House when Jack was a senator and the Eisenhowers were here. It was just unbearable. There would be Mamie in one chair and Ike in another. And on Mamie's right side would be the guest of honor, male, and on Ike's right side would be the guest of honor, female, and everybody stood, and there was nothing to drink. During that regime, there was never anything served to drink, and we made up our minds, when we came to the White House, that nobody was ever going to be as bored as that. We do try to make it a good party."

So there we said good night at the door. When we told the President what a wonderful party it had been, he replied that it had been very lovely to have us. He said that in a very warm and personal way, but he was actually looking out the door. Jackie was at the party every moment of it, at least the upstairs part of it, and dying to go on some more. But he was tired and wanted to get to business. Or bed.

Bobby Kennedy led us to an elevator—I guess it was a private family elevator, very large but not very sturdy-looking, and we all trooped into it. Bobby started to close the door, when suddenly Jackie and Jack Kennedy came down the hall to see us off. It was a bit of a squeeze with so many of us, but Bobby stayed at his post to run it. Jackie said, "Oh, Bob, you can't crowd this many people into this elevator. Think of the headlines tomorrow morning, with all these distinguished people dead at the bottom of the shaft!" "It's all right, it's all right," Bobby replied. "Hold on, Mr. Frost!" He closed the gate. At our last sight of Jackie, she was waving to us. The car went down, and when we got downstairs we were led by Bobby to another portico, where our wraps were waiting for us. They'd been put there while we were upstairs.

"Are you staying at a hotel in Washington?" Bobby asked me. I said that we were going back to New York by the late-night train. He looked confounded. "The train?" he repeated, as if I had just told him that we were journeying to New York by tandem bicycle. I assured him that I loved night trains, but he shook his head, unbelieving.

I don't know how we got to the train station—I suppose they had a car waiting for us. We could have danced our way, Lionel and I were so giddy. In fact, we did dance into the train station—I remember that. I had my left arm raised, Lionel had his right arm raised, and he was holding my hand while my mink stole trailed from our enfolded fingers. It was a kind of minuet we performed the length of the Union Station all the way to our train and our compartment. ♦

Left to right: Dancers Drew Kaluski, Dein Perry, Ben Read, Nathan Sheens, Christopher Horsey, and Darren Disne

“Tap Dogs.”

PORTFOLIO BY ARTHUR ELGORT

LEAPIN’ WIZARDS

Above: Mark Morris levitating over Ruth Davidson and Kraig Patterson.

THE dark horse of the current dance season has been “Tap Dogs” (at the Union Square Theatre), Australia’s answer to the new tuxedo-free tap dance. The show was brought over by six butch guys from Newcastle, the Pittsburgh of Down Under, and they are true to their roots. They dance in big work boots. They do a steel-grinding routine. Things fly: sparks, sweat, buckets of water. (Viewers in the front rows have to put on slickers.) Two or three of the men are exceptional tappers, and all of them are genial ambassadors from a world apparently untouched by the sexual politics of the past three decades.

Meanwhile, two of New York’s most beautiful dancers are performing at Lincoln Center. Monique Meunier, a Cuban-Ecuadorian from Los Angeles who looks like a dairymaid from Minnesota, is a New York City Ballet corps member who looks like a star. The virtuoso Desmond Richardson, a former Alvin Ailey dancer who has signed on with American Ballet Theatre to play the Moor in Lar Lubovitch’s “Othello,” dances as if he were on fire.

In August, the Mark Morris Dance Group goes to the Edinburgh Festival to première Morris’s production of Rameau’s opera “Platée,” of 1745. Morris offers this plot summary: “Platée is an ugly water nymph who lives in a swamp in Greece. The weather’s really bad there, because Jupiter and Juno are having one of their marital arguments. So Mercury stages a fake wedding between Platée and Jupiter, and everything turns out O.K.” The cast includes a full complement of gods, together with snakes, newts, and birds.

—JOAN ACOCELLA

Monique Meunier, ribbons flying, in costume for New York City Ballet's production of Balanchine's "Brahms-Schoenberg Quartet."

Desmond Richardson, in a "Gray's Anatomy" breastplate, as the jealous Moor in Lar Lubovitch's "Othello," at American Ballet Theatre.

PROFILE

THE HIGH ROLLER

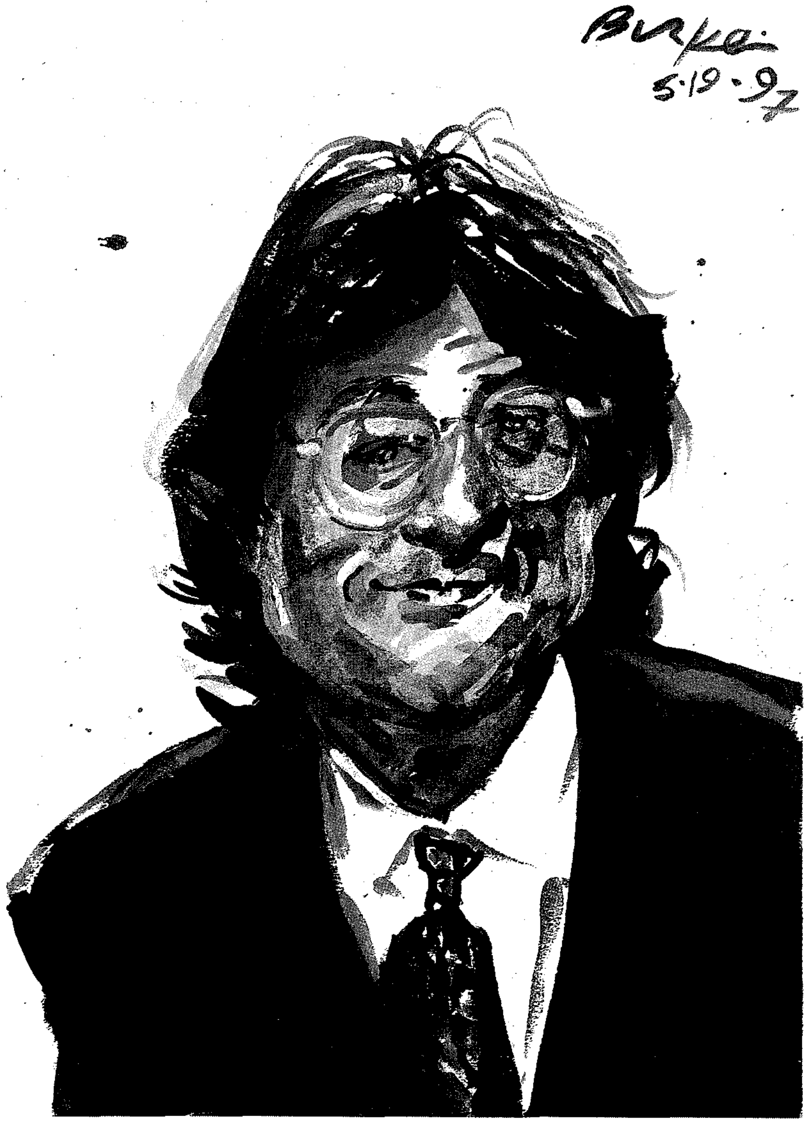
Is it possible to make money off musicals? It is, if, like the producer Garth Drabinsky, you're willing to gamble with the way Broadway does business.

BY JOHN LAHR

In the far north end of Toronto's Pearson International Airport, a private blue-and-white Falcon 200 jet with its meter running at three thousand dollars an hour is waiting for the Canadian producer Garth Drabinsky to roll up and begin another junket in the perpetual roundup of his theatrical productions, which at this writing number ten. Drabinsky is the chairman and C.E.O. of Livent, the only publicly owned entertainment company of its kind in North America, with revenues in 1996 of three hundred and thirty-two million dollars. In the previous week, while exercising what bankers like to call "fiduciary responsibility," he jetted back and forth from his Toronto headquarters to Vancouver, Los Angeles, and New York (twice), and on this bright, blowy afternoon he is setting off again for L.A., where the second company of his sensational new musical, "Ragtime," based on E. L. Doctorow's novel and adapted by Terrence McNally, is having its final rehearsal-room run-through before taking up residence in the Shubert Theatre on the Avenue of the Stars, in Century City. (A third production of "Ragtime" will open in January on Broadway, at the Ford Center for the Performing Arts, which is Drabinsky's renovation and amalgamation of the old Lyric and Apollo theatres, on Forty-second Street.) Drabinsky, who is forty-seven, admits that he "took a huge personal risk," in late 1989, when he started Livent with his partner, Myron Gottlieb; they borrowed eighty million dollars to buy Toronto's twenty-two-hundred-seat Pantages Theatre and acquire the Canadian rights to Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Phantom of the Opera." But his confidence in theatre and his unique producing practices have so far been rewarded: this year, Livent's share of the weekly twenty-five-million-dollar North American box-office grosses is approaching twenty-five per cent.

The numbers make Drabinsky the current mahatma of musical theatre—the producer who has found new ways to shake the musical's money tree. Drabinsky started his career in 1973 as an entertainment lawyer, and had produced six movies by the time he was thirty-two; in 1979, he co-founded the movie-theatre chain Cineplex, and proved to be a dynamic, controversial president. In the course of ten years, during which he turned a downtown-Toronto multiplex into a billion-dollar, diversified company with over eighteen hundred screens across North America and the United Kingdom, he came to be seen by some as a brilliant, risktaking visionary, while others dubbed him the "Garth Vader" of the movie world; he was known as the man who both put real butter on popcorn and raised New York movie ticket prices from six to seven dollars. Drabinsky wanted to expand the company further, particularly in the area of theatre, but by the end of 1988 the speed of Cineplex's growth had created a long-term debt of seven hundred and ninety-seven million Canadian dollars, against assets of $1.5 billion, with a profit for that year of forty-nine million dollars—a situation that caused the company's stock to start losing value. In the ensuing struggle for control of Cineplex, Drabinsky, who by that point owned only four per cent of it, tried to buy back a controlling interest, but he was blocked by M.C.A., one of the main equity holders, which took issue with his management of the company. Drabinsky was ultimately ousted and given a golden handshake of almost four million dollars, but he also came away with a murky history: a kind of Gatsby-like shadow hung over the tale of his rise. Financial institutions didn't shy away from Drabinsky after his Cineplex departure—many of them invested in Livent—but the Broadway community did. Livent's logo, designed by Drabinsky, is a griffin, which he thinks of as his phoenix; the company, whose destiny he could guide unimpeded, was to be the rebirth of both his reputation and his theatrical plan.

For the cost of one motion-picture negative (about fifty-five million dollars), Drabinsky figures he can make five or six musicals. Livent is a nineties theatre-production company structured like a thirties film studio—"a vertically integrated corporation," as he puts it, where the product is developed, marketed, and exhibited by the company. Through this approach, Drabinsky has extraordinary creative leeway and easy access to capital. The conventional Broadway producer finds a property and forms a limited partnership; following the rules of the limited partnership, he raises money that can be used *only* for the single project. Not Drabinsky. His shows are funded under Livent's corporate umbrella; his funds are not defined, which allows him legitimately to rob Peter to pay Paul—that is, to inject cash from a show that's doing well into one that needs help. This arrangement also provides an enormous bankroll for developing new work. "He inspires a lot of envy," says the producer Margo Lion, who took eleven years to mount "Jelly's Last Jam." Drabinsky sees no point in stumping up eight million dollars or so to produce a show until it has been fully explored and tested. Although most Broadway producers "workshop" their shows and often get regional theatres to mount them as part of this process, the producer has to surrender a certain amount of creative freedom to the regional institutions for the privilege. Drabinsky does not. He develops everything in-house, over a long, pay-as-you-go gestation period. His process is much more elaborate than that of other producers, and he employs more actors (four hundred and forty-five), more musicians (two hundred and seven), and more stage managers (thirty-eight) than any other producer in North America. He also employs three advertising companies; the volume of his business insures discounted rates, and that, in turn, means more ads over a longer period to make a market for his shows.



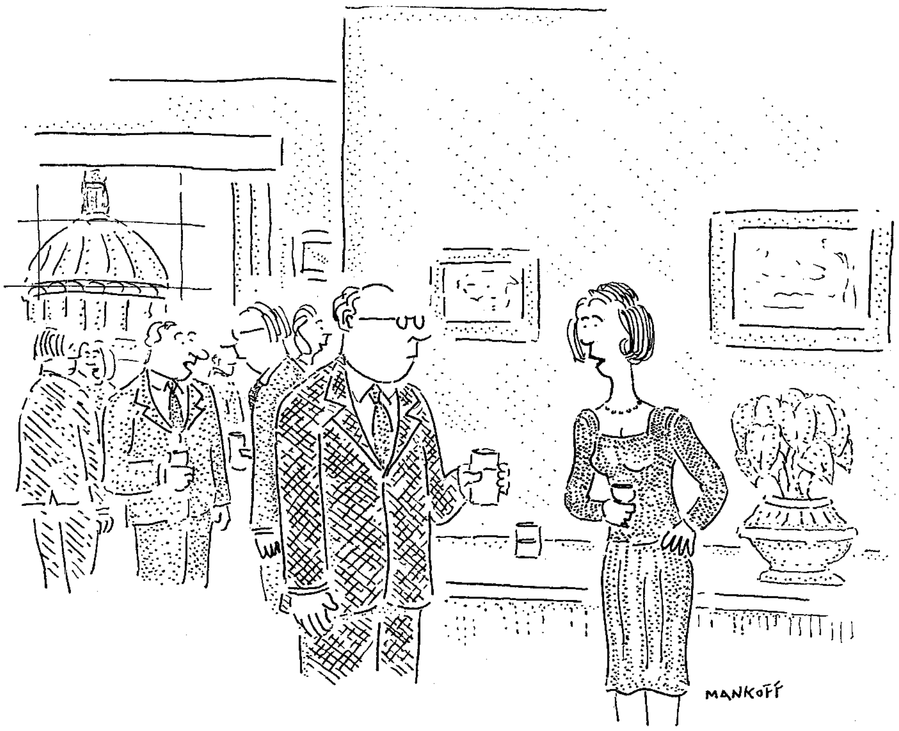
If Drabinsky were a general, his colleague E. L. Doctorow says, "he'd be George S. Patton. He'd have a pistol on his hip and design his own uniform."

PHILIP BURKE

Broadway producers, sometimes including Drabinsky himself, have to rent venues for their shows, but even this expense, which is subject to the vagaries of the free market, can be eliminated. In order to control the destiny of his shows in major markets, Drabinsky has begun building theatres around North America—a bold gesture that, given his business plan and the size of his musicals, turns out, like the private jet, to be efficient, and even necessary. Seeing an opportunity to benefit from the City of New York's incentives to renovate Forty-second Street, Drabinsky has leased the Apollo and Lyric theatres for seventy-five years—a thirty-million-dollar investment that is reduced substantially by its being exempt from city and state taxes, by his selling the name of the theatre to Ford "for a significant amount," and by his receiving investment tax credits for renovating the buildings before the end of 1997. "It is impossible to produce, knowing that you have to open a major show and might not have a venue available for your creative team when they are ready to go," Drabinsky says. "If you have to wait for a theatre, then opportunities fall by the wayside." If "The Red Shoes" had not been a huge flop at the Gershwin Theatre, in New York, in 1993, Drabinsky's "Show Boat" (which by the year 2000 will have grossed more than six hundred million dollars) would not have come to Broadway, because no other theatre could house it. And the Gershwin is currently the only theatre in New York that would be ample enough for "Ragtime"; the L.A. booking for the show happened only because the Shubert house became available and was big enough to handle it. So Drabinsky's Forty-second Street theatre has been designed to the exact specifics of his artistic requirements. It will have eighteen hundred seats, a pit "that could handle a Verdi-size orchestra," and a backstage area that is a third larger than that of any other theatre in New York. "I believe it was the right decision for our company not to be in a position where we could be shut out of New York City," he says.

In practical terms, all this makes the Toronto-born Drabinsky the first producer in the history of American show business to consistently mount shows without the usual backers' auditions and the enervating hunt for investing angels. The search for financing has made the musical the paradigm of American capitalism—the big-risk-and-big-return crapshoot—but it has also made Broadway a timid, unstimulating theatrical environment. Unlike other Broadway producers, who gamble with the money of their investors, Drabinsky is playing with his own company's chips, and at any one time he has an unusually high number of chips on the table. "Fifteen to twenty per cent of the shows that are produced make money," says Rocco Landesman, the president of Jujamcyn Theatres, which owns five Broadway houses. "Drabinsky's really got to bat .800 in a league where the average is .200." Landesman, who is himself a gambler and has also managed mutual funds, is at once thrilled and spooked by Drabinsky's daring. "I do sleep better at night knowing that I'm not him," Landesman says. "But I love to watch. It's like watching Evel Knievel."

A GRAY Mercedes eases out onto the airfield and deposits Drabinsky at the stairway to the plane. He is an owlish, heavyset, broad-shouldered man, with a doughy face and a mass of thick black hair. "If he were a general, he'd be George S. Patton," says E. L. Doctorow, who suspects his colleague of being "a bit of an actor." He says, "He'd have a pistol on his hip and design his own uniform." But there is no swagger to Drabinsky



"Has there ever been a country that had the word 'Democratic' in its name that was?"

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when he emerges into the watery light, wearing a brown leather jacket, a teal St. Bart's T-shirt, and black alligator loafers, and with his jaw clenched in pain. The stairway has only four steps, but Drabinsky takes them slowly. He contracted polio in the summer of 1953, at the age of three, and there is a three-quarter-inch differential between his left and right legs. This makes it difficult for him to walk; it also puts enormous pressure on his lower back. "A mile is, for me, a marathon," he writes in "Closer to the Sun," his five-hundred-page autobiography; sometimes, like today, his back goes into spasm. "I never know quite when or how it's going to happen," he says. "It takes about two days to ultimately work its way through and calm down." He slides into the first of the plane's six beige leatherette seats, the one with the white telephone on the window ledge.

Drabinsky, who has a kind of meat-and-potatoes earnestness combined with a zealot's intensity, prefers the term "producer" to "showman" or "impresario," but he is a bit of all three. His ego is properly robust for his job description; he sees himself "in a league of my own" as a musical-theatre producer. "I didn't go into the arena to generate heat," he says. "I went into the arena to produce important theatre." Nonetheless, his taste, tenacity, and chutzpah link him to a distant, grandiose producing brotherhood—all of whose members invented flamboyant public events, including themselves. Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr., for instance, was called the Great Glorifier, though what his "Follies" really glorified was not beauty but wealth, which he eroticized. Billy Rose tried to mix the prestige of highbrow artists like Igor Stravinsky and Salvador Dali with the high jinks of lowbrow escape. Drabinsky, the product of more parlous and expensive theatrical times, is cut from the same jazzy cloth, but with a difference. What he wants is not to make history with shows of wealth but to make wealth with shows of history. "I understand producing to be the nurturing of material," he says. His restoration of "Show Boat," his choice of "Ragtime" (a kind of sequel to "Show Boat" which deals with America's violent emergence as an industrial giant), and his projected "Parade," about a 1912 murder trial in the South, all reflect his hankering to bring forth first-class musicals that "engage in significant social discourse." With "Ragtime" in particular, the first major show that Drabinsky has originated, he has found a path that leads away from the sometimes arid, avant-garde deconstructions of Stephen Sondheim and toward more fertile narratives, which return the musical to a moral universe and to the realm of popular art.

"Garth is creating life where there was none," Terrence McNally says. His "Kiss of the Spider Woman" was resurrected by Drabinsky after the New York critics panned Hal Prince's SUNY workshop of it in 1990 as if it were a real Broadway opening; Livent overhauled it, and the show went on to win seven Tonys in 1993, including the award for Best Musical. "That's a bold thing to do," McNally adds. "This cautious thing is all wrong: the not-for-profit, dramaturge-it-to-death, let's-get-a-hundred-people-to-see-it-and-then-maybe-we'll-bring-it-to-New York. You've got to be a showman. Garth is controversial. He's stagestruck, God bless him."

But, perhaps more important, in the economic chaos of Broadway, Drabinsky has devised a systematic method for developing new work and for "creating the conditions to let collaboration happen." "Ragtime" 's subtle epic tale, for example, and the process that brought it to fruition over the three years before its Toronto opening, last winter, are a conscious departure by Livent from the old, ad-hoc Broadway practice. The show is finishing its sixth month, and the creative team is still refining it. It's all part of Drabinsky's attempt to exercise quality control—to turn what is essentially a gamble into more of a risk-free proposition. "The idea of having forty actors and forty stage crew and rentals of extraordinary amounts of money for equipment pouring out on an hourly basis and writers locked in a room in the hope that an idea will come into their heads is, I think, foolhardy," he says of Broadway's much mythologized tryout method.

In order to do things his way, Drabinsky withdrew from the League of Producers and negotiated his own contracts with Actors' Equity and the Dramatists Guild. His Equity arrangement abolished the disruptive and expensive provision that chorus members can leave a show with just two weeks' notice, and his Dramatists Guild agreement departs from the traditional minuscule-payment formula. If a show actually reaches the stage, the standard contract provides for a maximum of seventy-eight thousand dollars to be split among the writer, the lyricist, and the composer; Drabinsky's formula offers a three-way split of approximately five hundred thousand dollars, in exchange for worldwide rights, some royalty adjustments, and his authors' full, undivided attention during the gestation of the project. "Seeing dozens of people being able to afford to write in the theatre is thrilling, thrilling," Drabinsky says.

His competition isn't so happy. "I was very disturbed by the amount of money Garth was paying the artists, because it didn't seem to me that any independent producer could compete with that," Margo Lion says. "The best artists, given the chance, would go there to work." And they have. John Guare is currently developing "The Sweet Smell of Success," Ken Ludwig the Dr. Seuss books, and Terrence McNally a restoration of Rodgers and Hart's "Pal Joey," while Alfred Uhry is writing "Parade." Since musical collaborations are delicate things, these projects are all step deals, with many permutations and pitfalls. (Guare, for instance, came in as a replacement after two writers—including his friend Arthur Kopit—hadn't worked out.) The first literary step is a sixty-page treatment of the story—something that, to my knowledge, no Broadway producer has ever required. "I think the idea of putting three people in a room to write from the inception bogs the project down," Drabinsky says. "However, having the basis of a story completely solved, hopefully in the first instance, the composer and lyricist can go back to the source material to look at the imagery, the characters, and the moments that call out for singing. If Terrence hadn't been able to unlock 'Ragtime,' I would not have been able to entice the right set of composers to write the show." Drabinsky put the music for "Ragtime" out to tender: eight composing teams were paid to write four songs, the best of which were subsequently played anonymously for Doctorow, who had the final say. The lyricist Lynn Ahrens and the composer Stephen Flaherty emerged as the unanimous choice. "The phone rang and I said, 'Hello,' and he said, 'My name is Garth Drabinsky,'" Ahrens recalls, adopting Drabinsky's gruffspeak. She continues, "He said, 'I'm going to give you guys a shot at this thing. But I have to tell you, what you've done is just the beginning. I'm going to push you harder and make you go further than you've ever gone before. It's just the minimum you've given me here.' And he said, 'I want you to know that if you don't give me what I want I'm having it written into your contract that I can fire you.' So, I'm sort of holding the phone away from my ear and looking at it in shock. And I said, 'Well, thank you.'" About a year and a half later, at a celebration dinner after a successful six-week workshop of the show, Ahrens found herself seated next to a grateful Drabinsky. She recalled to him their first conversation, which had become a kind of party piece for her. "He looked at me for a long time and then he shook his head and looked down," Ahrens says. "He said, 'I was scared.'"

"I know what a producer should be, and Garth's it," says Hal Prince, who before Drabinsky came along was himself the great producing force of the postwar Broadway musical ("Fiddler on the Roof," "West Side Story," "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum"), and has worked as a director for Drabinsky on five productions. "Garth reasons accurately that the wheel has to be reinvented before it's too late. Things have been done a certain way for so long, and that way won't work anymore, because the ground rules have changed. Audiences have changed."

NOW, as his plane lurches into the sky without so much as a "Fasten your seat belt," Drabinsky props a pillow behind his back and says, "I'm always focussed all the time on all the shows." So what's he thinking about this very minute?

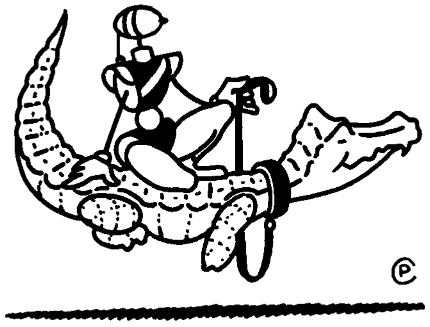
He stares out the window at the crazy quilt of farmland below. "Fourteen hundred actors auditioned for fifty-five roles in 'Ragtime,'" he says. "Can other actors bring different nuances to the roles? Do you have the capacity to do it again? Is your second bet right?" He's got the same worry about "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat," which has grossed more than two hundred and twenty million dollars for Livent so far. "I'm thinking about whether or not the replacement for Donny Osmond—he's finally hanging up the coat, after five years—is going to break through. When we were in L.A. casting for 'Ragtime,' in January, a young kid—David Burnham—came in. I'm spending a lot of time grooming this kid. We just had him in the studio, recording 'Close Every Door' and 'Any Dream Will Do' as a CD sampler that we'll give out to the radio stations, to get his voice, his persona, all

"I've never trusted cows."

over. It's a risk. I'm worried about that." Then, there's "The Phantom of the Opera," which opened in Toronto eight years ago this September and, along with the Canadian touring-company version, has racked up a gross so far of five hundred and seventy-five million dollars. "The Toronto advance today is approximately six million dollars," Drabinsky says. "It opened at twenty-three million dollars eight years ago. Therefore, there's still effectively twenty-five per cent of that initial advance available. Does that mean that there are two or three more years left in 'Phantom'? How many more marketing programs can we put in place? How much more good will extends to this show? In 1988, I was deemed to be certifiably crazy when I talked about three years of it in Toronto at a new theatre."

Drabinsky dials his office and cradles the receiver on his shoulder. The Broadway box-office for "Candide," which opened a few days before to disappointing reviews, is up twenty-five per cent, after the news that the show's stars, Andrea Martin and Jim Dale, are among the Tony Award nominees. "The trend is going in the right direction," Drabinsky says. "Right now, I'm trying to decide what segment of the show to put on the Tony Awards." Money is in the details, and Drabinsky's mind is awash with them: the new revisions of "Parade" that he'll need for a casting session at the end of the week in New York, where he'll be looking for an actress to play opposite Matthew Broderick; the exterior signs on his Broadway theatre, and the final mixture of terrazzo in its lobby. In his autobiography he takes issue with people who describe him as "driven." "I don't understand the phrase," he writes. "I think driven is a comfort word for the lazy, for people who don't know what to think. I'll never let an enticing opportunity go by without trying to take advantage of it. Is that driven? I don't know how to do anything unless it's to the best of my ability. Is that driven?"

In a suite on the second floor of the Beverly Hills Hotel the next morning, Drabinsky has positioned himself to look nonchalant at his living-room desk; but it's plain to see that he can barely move. It's touch and go whether he'll make it to the run-through. "I was just thinking this morning again, having this bad back, that I have enormous will to not waste a minute of life," he says. Drabinsky's autobiography begins and ends with a three-year-old boy's buoyant memory of darting through the sprinklers on the family lawn just before he lost forever the control of his left leg and fell to the ground. "I remember most of all the wonderful freedom to run and run and run," Drabinsky writes. Every summer from the age of seven until he was twelve, Drabinsky's leg was operated on, leaving him with months of recuperation on crutches. After his first operation, he was in a body cast that went from his waist down both of his legs. His father, a mechanical engineer, had to carry him everywhere. "I felt utterly helpless," Drabinsky says. But he learned early from his parents the stoic practice of burying inconsolable feelings. "My parents never displayed huge emotion in the house," he says. "There was a lot of emotion over my sickness when I was a child—not external as much as internal. I could see it always on my parents' faces. My mother always took the position that she should show fortitude and thereby give me strength and not any reason to feel sorry for myself. I guess in part I concur with that." His parents, who had big hospital bills to pay and two younger sons to raise, lived frugally. "I couldn't respond to their small view of life and I hated their caution," Drabinsky writes. "There were no trips to the theatre, no concerts, no museums. I was eleven by the time I had my first meal in a restaurant." He was fourteen when he first encountered theatre—his high school's production of Molière's "The Imaginary Invalid." His passion for theatre can be charted from that moment. At eighteen, he produced a musical variety show at the school, which sold out for four nights and raised twenty-five thousand dollars; at nineteen, he was trying (and failing) to whip up movie financing for Elie Wiesel's concentration-camp memoir "Night." Submersion in a world of play provided Drabinsky with an escape from the incarceration of his body. "He didn't have the power of his body," Frank Galati, the director of "Ragtime," says. "The force of his power is, I think, in part born out of that. He made himself fly, not just fall. He's been struggling to get up all his life. I think he's looking for a story that can heal. He believes in music. He understands that music has a power to ascend."



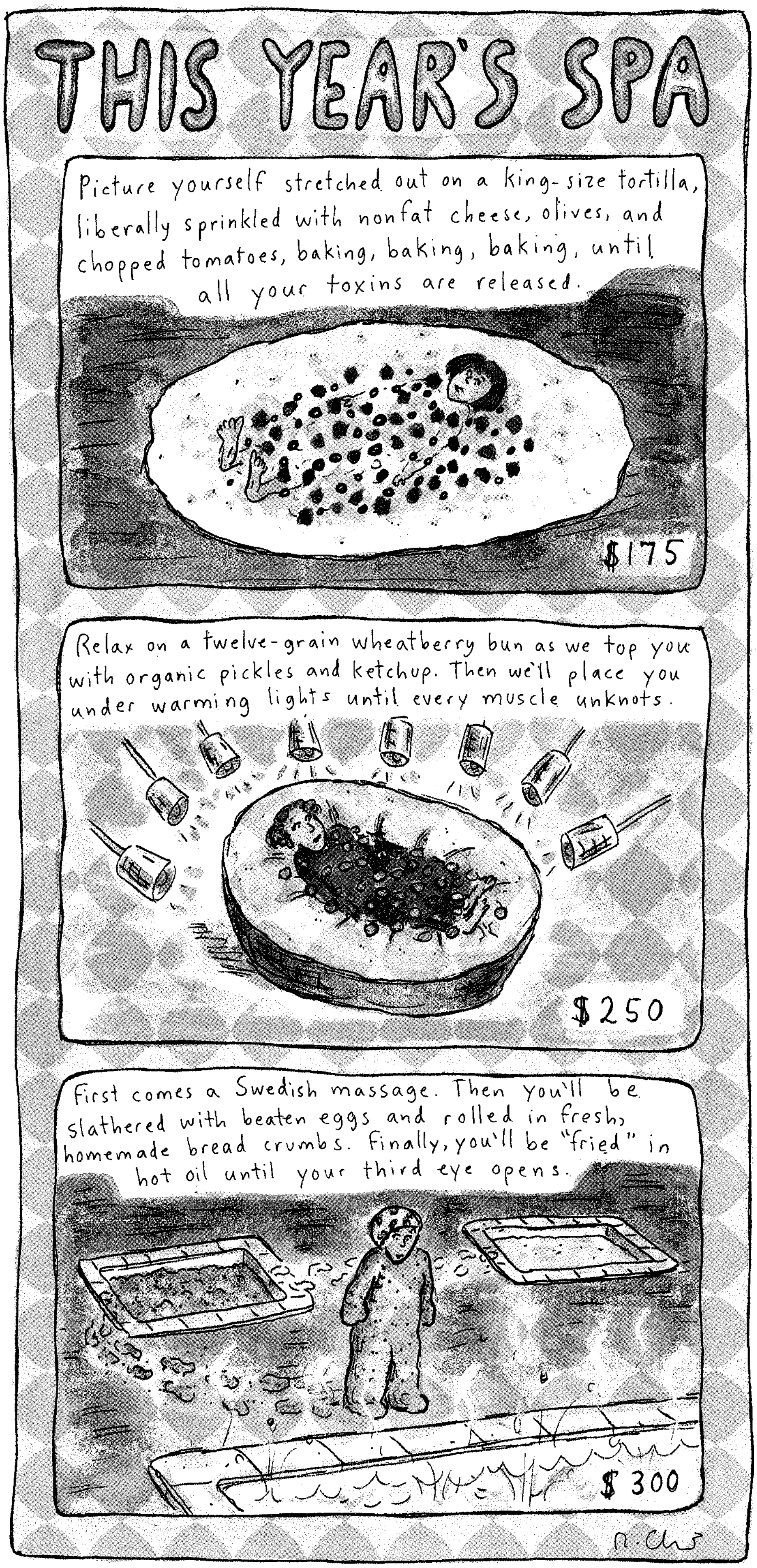
Drabinsky is perpetually seizing his day; he has grabbed on to the live wire of achievement and can't let go. Inevitably, he has paid a price for this. Now the proud but mostly absent father of Alicia, a junior at Brown, and Marc, a high-school senior, Drabinsky married Pearl Kaplan in 1971, at the age of twenty-one. Drabinsky in love was a "tidal wave"; being swamped is always an issue when his passion is high. Once, he camped out on Pearl's porch until she came home from a date at two-fifteen in the morning; he stayed until the competition had been seen off, and proceeded to propose. Although they are still married, Drabinsky admits that "it's painful for me to contemplate, but I haven't been a good family man."

The passions of his youth have other echoes in his adulthood. As a boy, he was a wizard at board games, especially Monopoly, at which he was the local champ. "I was unbelievably aggressive," he writes. "I would disconcert my opponents because I moved pieces so quickly." In a sense, he is still playing Monopoly—developing theatre real estate in the hope of a huge payoff when his shows land on it. As we talk in his hotel room, he studies a piece of paper in front of him and makes occasional notations on it during numerous telephone interruptions to our conversation. The paper is a printed sheet divided into columns, each with numbered lines under it. This is a microeconomic picture of his business empire—a summary of each day's ticket sales from 11 A.M. to 9 P.M. Every day, every hour, either Drabinsky himself or his secretary fills in the numbers in each column. "Numbers teach you a great deal," he says. "They teach you the pulse of the marketplace. By watching the hourly trend of the buying public and whether they're buying at the box office or by phone or by outlets, and by comparing the figures from the day before and the week before, you can assess the effectiveness of your advertising campaign. You can assess word of mouth.

You can assess the urgency of the public to want to see a show." What are the figures telling him at noon today? He turns the paper toward me and points to the Toronto "Phantom" column. " 'Phantom' is going to sell some fifteen hundred tickets," he says. "It's three o'clock there, and we've already sold eight hundred single tickets. Generally, where we are at two o'clock is fifty per cent of where we'll be at nine o'clock."

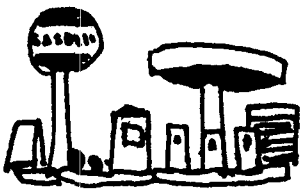
The numbers that Drabinsky is most interested to see are the "walkup figures"—the tally of paying customers who come at the last minute, which signals "the demand for the show now as opposed to three months from now." He continues, "If you sit and don't react to news, then you're a fool. And if you spend too much time waiting to react you're a fool. It's like putting blood into the system. The I.V. line is the amount of inducement to the public, and the inducement is various forms of advertising." Drabinsky spends about twelve per cent of a show's weekly gross on advertising, but when he's supporting a show like "Ragtime" for an open-ended run in a major market he puts out between one and a half and two million dollars—to be spent, in part, on at least a hundred different "looks" for ads devised by the three agencies Livent uses, and on a cast recording. The "Ragtime" album has already sold nearly sixty thousand copies; Drabinsky estimates that the show, after three and a half months of being sold to Los Angeles (with no awards and no New York imprimatur), will open with a strong advance of "somewhere between five and six million." The public is eager to see "Ragtime," but no one is more avid to see its new incarnation than the producer himself. Drabinsky's pleasure, however, will have to be postponed. Around noon, he calls off the run-through until the following morning, when, all being well, he'll be able to make it there on his own two feet.

THE Debbie Reynolds Professional Rehearsal Studio is a large, low lump of concrete thrown down in the sweltering flatlands of the San Fernando Valley. At either side of the large main rehearsal room are two behemoth cardboard caricatures by Al Hirschfeld of Debbie herself, turbaned and bejewelled, in the 1973 revival of "Irene." The spirit of the old Broadway musical is looking


THIS YEAR'S SPA
Picture yourself stretched out on a king-size tortilla, liberally sprinkled with nonfat cheese, olives, and chopped tomatoes, baking, baking, baking, until all your toxins are released.
$175
Relax on a twelve-grain wheatberry bun as we top you with organic pickles and ketchup. Then we'll place you under warming lights until every muscle unknots.
$250
First comes a Swedish massage. Then you'll be slathered with beaten eggs and rolled in fresh, homemade bread crumbs. Finally, you'll be "fried" in hot oil until your third eye opens.
$300
R. Chast

down incongruously on the new. All the “Ragtime” actors being taken through their warmup, all the members of the creative team settling into their numbered chairs, all the support staff organizing the troops have been affected by Drabinsky’s swashbuckling global vision. The cast and their unmiked voices ravish their producer, who leans forward to watch Frank Galati’s new staging and to listen to the rewrites that have deepened and clarified the lives of the main characters, especially that of Tateh, the immigrant artist on the Lower East Side, and also of minor historical characters like Emma Goldman. Since its opening in Toronto, where the show was promising but unfocussed in places, impressive work has been done. At the end of the run-through, the cast and the creative team applaud each other; Galati wipes away tears. There is a sense of calm in the room, and an unspoken but palpable pride in the project. The cast members gather around Drabinsky’s chair, sitting attentively about ten feet away from him, like kids at show-and-tell. “Opening night in Toronto, I remember saying to the cast that I wanted the show to run a long time. And the reason I did was because I wanted to *love* the show a long time,” Drabinsky says, with uncharacteristic charm. “It’s clear to me that all of you here truly love the show. I can see it in your eyes, in your hearts, in your passion today.” He concludes, “You’re part of something that I think will be very historically significant. I look forward to seeing you on the Avenue of the Stars.”

But an hour later, when Drabinsky sits down at the producer’s table, which is set up in the crepuscular gloom of Row Q of the Shubert Theatre, command, and not congratulation, is in his voice. He is here to look at the show’s new scenic elements, including some slide projections by the designer Wendell Harrington, which she was asked to create because “we need stronger emotional moments that lighting and scenic design couldn’t handle.” Drabinsky drinks in the statuesque beauty of Eugene Lee’s blue-gray replica of New York’s Third Avenue El. “Frank, do me a favor. Have everybody come here, because I can’t sit in those seats,” he calls out to the production head, Frank Scardino, who refers to the producer as Himself. Drabinsky is notorious for what Hal Prince calls his “volcano roar.” His voice is a blunt instrument that punches its way into every conversation and has a way of landing like an uppercut. “Garth learned a lot from watching Hal work,” Terrence McNally says. “Hal’s a screamer and a yeller. Hal only negotiates from force. Sitting there, I think, Garth thought, This is how you direct, this is how you produce—you scream at people. But Garth does listen. He’ll still yell, because that’s his nature, but he knows.”



Excitement and impatience usually fuel Drabinsky’s outbursts. At one early casting meeting for the Toronto production of “Ragtime,” he started shouting and banging the table like Nikita Khrushchev at the United Nations. To complete the Khrushchev picture, Lynn Ahrens took off her size-6 shoe and handed it to him. Drabinsky laughed. “So, what are we going to do about our Garth? He’s not the easiest person in the world,” Elaine Stritch said to McNally a few years ago, when he dropped into her dressing room in Toronto, where she was starring in Livent’s “Show Boat” and he was adapting “Ragtime.” “I said, ‘He’s worth fighting with,’ ” McNally recalls. “And Elaine said, ‘That’s it, exactly. He’s worth it, God damn it.’ ”

Nothing seems to be happening on the Shubert stage, and Drabinsky is impatient. He calls over an assistant, Bob Whelan.

“I haven’t seen the Million Dollar Pier,” he says. “That I desperately want to see. I want to see the set for the ‘Journey On’ moment.”

Whelan has obviously been here before and gives firm answers that are intended more to educate than to appease. “Right now, we got all the crew backstage working and repairing,” he says. “We go into a scene-change mode, we gotta pull everybody off. If that’s what you want to do, we’ll do it.”

“That’s what the whole purpose is right now, because I’m not going to be here the next three, four days,” Drabinsky says. “I just want to see this stuff, O.K., Bob, because (a) I paid for it, and (b) I’d like to see what it looks like. Am I not entitled?”

Unlike most producers, Drabinsky makes it his business to be involved in everything. “From the beginning, I have to be totally involved in the collaborative development of the work,” he says. He sat through twelve ass-aching hours of “Ragtime” ’s technical rehearsals—a feat unheard of in the choreographer Graciela Daniele’s vast professional experience of producers. “Garth tends to want to know what’s going on,” Daniele says. “At a tech, there are millions of things happening at the same time. He would come up and ask, ‘What’s happening now? Why are we stopping now?’ I said, ‘Garth, not now. I’ll explain later.’ ” She goes on, “Although he can drive you crazy, he has a childlike wonder about how it all works.”

Drabinsky also has opinions, and they have to be dealt with. “He’s very smart,” Arthur Kopit says. “He does not make dumb suggestions. They may be wrong, but he’ll listen.” In his Cineplex days, Drabinsky screened about three hundred films a year and sat through countless postproduction editing sessions. This proved “an incredible training ground,” Drabinsky says. “When you look at film on a screen, forty by twenty, you’re looking at the entire stage, not just what’s going on between the actors. So I am highly sensitive to sound cues, lighting cues, automation moves that aren’t completely fluid. All these things aggravate me until they’re perfect.”

Drabinsky’s intrusiveness is a problem that all his collaborators have found different solutions to. “I won’t be interrupted,” Prince says. “If he starts, I’ll stop him. I’ll suddenly say, ‘Not *now*. Not another word out of you.’ ” Galati takes a Zen approach to Drabinsky’s barrage of notes and questions. His mantra is a maxim from his university poetry teacher: “The mountain will stand.” He explains, “No matter what happens, no matter how much trouble there is, the mountain that you look at, that you love, won’t be taken away.”

Today, the team teases Drabinsky out of his rapid-fire interrogation. “Take it from the top!” Drabinsky calls to the stage manager. “I gotta see the Roosevelt,” he adds, referring to a “ship” that appears on stage.

“Gotta! Gotta!” says Lynn Ahrens, who, along with Galati and Daniele, has sat down in Row P, just below Drabinsky’s table.

“Jesus!” Drabinsky says in mock disgust. “Jesus!”

“I’d hate to be your mother,” Ahrens says.

"I'd just like to live long enough to hear what people say about me when I'm dead, that's all."

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"Now we're really getting bitchy," Drabinsky says. "Five months in the shops and I finally get a chance to see this stuff. You won't let me have my enthusiasm."

In fact, during the hour that they pore over Harrington's catalogue of visual options Drabinsky can hardly contain his delight. Harrington stands behind Drabinsky and takes him through the wizardry of her visual effects: a poster burning; newspaper headlines projected on the stage floor; images of the textile strike and union violence in Lawrence, Massachusetts; waves beneath the boat that brings the immigrant family to America. "There's the clouds," Drabinsky says. "Where's the water?"

"There it is," Harrington says. "It's moving."

"Very slow. The seas are too calm for me," Drabinsky says.

"I've actually already built the water to be choppier. I just didn't get a chance to put it in."

"Aha! You see that, Wendell? You and I are in synch."

"You want to see the sail?" the stage manager calls from the wings.

"Yes, I do," Drabinsky says. "I want to see it all."

By the end of the afternoon, Harrington is bemused by Drabinsky. "I'm so unused to a producer holding an opinion like that," she says. "It's disorienting. It upsets the natural order of things. It becomes complicated, because who do you take orders from?" Harrington's visual effects will cost Drabinsky about seventy-five thousand dollars; Broadway philosophes and critics (including me) have been known to criticize him for excessive "lavishness"—a word that makes Drabinsky feel like a Christian Scientist with appendicitis. Prince says, "One of the keys to a good creative producer is knowing when to say no and when to say yes. And a balance sheet is not the decision-maker. The decision-maker is: How will it impact artistically on the show?"

"What was the point of my doing 'Show Boat'?" Drabinsky asks. "What was the point of doing Kern's music and not having an orchestra of thirty in the pit? It would have been an incredible compromise." To Drabinsky—whose company operates at what he calls an "unbelievably conservative" debt-to-total-capital ratio of .5 to 1, with its books audited quarterly in Canada *and* the United States, because Livent is traded on the NASDAQ exchange—the spendthrift rap is a misconception of the economic discipline of his operation. "There is no gilding of the lily," he insists. "We do things responsibly. We have an infrastructure in-house. We build our shows in Canada, using Canadian dollars. Where at all possible, we build all our costumes in Toronto, in Canadian dollars, and therefore cheaper."

Many Broadway producers are skeptical about the solidity of Drabinsky's balance sheet. For instance, the company's preproduction costs rose between 1995 and 1996 from about $55.5 million Canadian to $75.6 million. "That's huge," Rocco Landesman says. "It's seventy-five million dollars in development money for current and future projects. It's a very vulnerable kind of asset. What if a show doesn't go well? These preproduction costs are a possible sword of Damocles hanging over his head if the productions aren't all that successful." These days, Drabinsky's business is brisk, although earnings per common share have been erratic (ninety-eight cents in 1995; seventy-five cents in 1996), largely because of the closing of the Canadian "Sunset Boulevard." Nonetheless, Terrence McNally recently took a strong stock position in Livent. "I know how much blood, guts, and money Garth has put on the line," he says. "I thought I should put some money in. I'm sharing a little of the nerves he goes through." McNally adds of his investment, "It'll go up when 'Ragtime' opens."

In his autobiography Drabinsky confesses to recognizing himself in the late Joseph Papp's definition of a producer: "the cunning of a master politician, the wiliness of a snake-oil salesman, the fanatical drive of a megalomaniac, and . . . nerves of steel." Perhaps "balls of steel" would have been more accurate. E. L. Doctorow was surprised to learn not long ago that Drabinsky "had hammered out a deal with my paperback publisher that gave him cover approval over *my* book. He also had the right to put ads for the show on my book." Doctorow, who has superseding cover approval, torpedoed these notions; but the situation put him in mind of something that Drabinsky once told him after another legal wrangle. "Edgar, you know I love you," Drabinsky said, "but this is business." ♦

FICTION

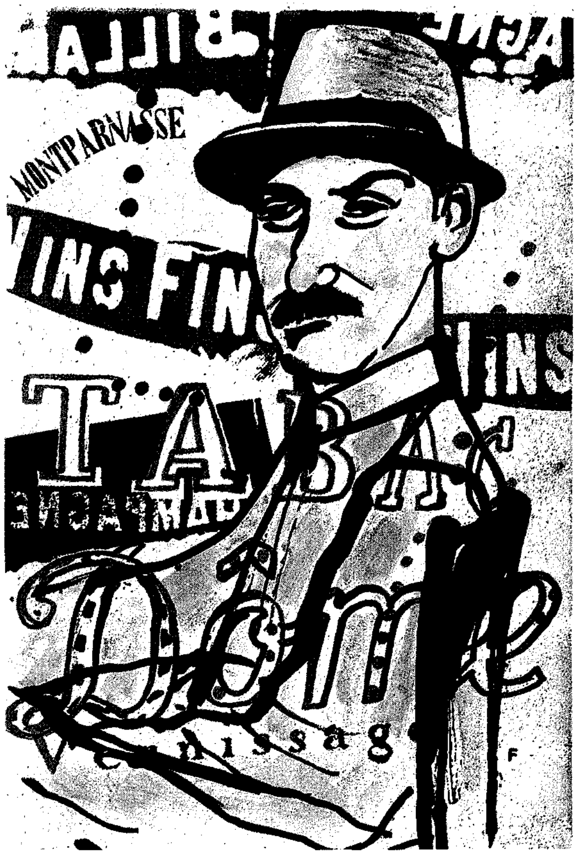
THE IMPOSTOR

When he died, in a car accident, at the age of thirty-seven, the author had two unpublished stories among his papers. One (“The Sun, the Lady, and the Gas Station”) has been lost; the other, “The Impostor,” was recently rediscovered by the editors of the Library of America.

BY NATHANAEL WEST

“In order to be an artist one has to live like one.” We know now that this is nonsense, but in Paris, in those days, we didn’t know it. “Artists are all crazy.” This is another statement from the same credo. Of course, these ideas and others like them were foisted on us by the non-artist, but we didn’t realize it then. We came to the business of being an artist with the definitions of the non-artist and took libels for the truth. In order to be recognized as artists, we were everything our enemies said we were.

“All artists are crazy.” Well, one of the easiest things to be is “crazy,” that is if you are satisfied with the uninformed layman’s definition of craziness. To be really crazy is quite a job. You have to have a great deal of mental and physical control and do a great deal of scientific reading. We didn’t have the control or want to do the reading; nor were these things necessary. Tourists and the folks back home, not doctors, were on our jury.



The author of “Miss Lonelyhearts” had made $780 from his fiction when he died, in 1940.

FILIP PAGOWSKI

As time went on, being “crazy” became more difficult. The jury gradually changed. Fellow-artists began to sit on it. This wasn’t quite as bad as doctors would have been, but it was pretty bad. Long hair and a rapt look wouldn’t get you to first base anymore. Even dirt, sandals, and “nightmindness” weren’t enough. You had to be original.

By the time I got to Montparnasse, the second stage was well advanced. All the more obvious roles had been dropped and the less obvious ones were being played by experts. There were still a few gents with long hair, but no one took them seriously and they were never invited to the important parties. What was I to do? How was I to make the grade?

After hiding in my hotel for about a week, not daring to show myself at the Dôme for fear of making a bad impression, I hit on a great idea. I had come to Paris from a runner’s job on Wall Street and still had the clothes I had worn there. Instead of buying a strange outfit and trying to cultivate some new idiosyncrasies, I decided to go in the other direction. “Craziness” through the exaggeration of normality was to be my method. In this land of soft shirts, worn open to the navel, and corduroy trousers, I would wear hard collars and carefully pressed suits of formal, stylish cut, and carry clean gloves and a tightly rolled umbrella. I would have precise, elaborate manners and exhibit pronounced horror at the slightest public breach of the conventions.

I was a big success right from the start. When I entered the Dôme, beer was spilled at many of the tables. More important, I was asked to all the parties.

It was at a party that I first met Beano Walsh. We were attracted to each other immediately, because each of us realized that the other made a perfect background for him. We were the absolute maximum in contrast—you know the rule, black against white surrounded by gray. Even our conversation was entirely different. I talked technically about field trials, the use of the ’scope in rifle shooting, and game cycles, while Beano talked lyrically about ancient Egypt, the Elgin marbles, and our mother the sea. When I lifted my glass, it was with a cheery “ ’Ware all!” Beano’s toast was “A dead whale or a stove boat!” or, sometimes, simply “Beauty!”

Beano was a stocky young man, short but very heavily muscled. He had arms as thick as thighs, a cedar-post neck, and on his head a great, living fan of red hair that was like some strange, monster sea urchin in erection. Summer and winter, he caged his hair in a derby. It was worth watching him do it. The struggle was terrific. He always won, but the victories were costly. No matter how strongly built his derby, in less than a month the pressure of his hair ruined its shape. The rest of his costume consisted of a basketball shirt with the insignia of the Celtic A.C. on the front, a pair of army riding trousers, leather puttees, and sneakers.

He was supposed to be a sculptor. In those days, if not in these, art critics, like Hollywood directors, insisted on typecasting. As a sculptor, Beano was cast perfectly. One look at his marvellous hands proved that; Rodin might have modelled them.

Oscar Hahn's art scouts had discovered him on a coal barge in the East River and had arranged for him to be sent to Paris to study. When they discovered him, he hadn't as yet made any sculpture, but according to the standards in vogue then—based, perhaps, on Cellini's autobiography and van Gogh's letters—he certainly looked and talked as though he might produce some wonderful stuff.

I had known Beano about a month when I was locked out of my hotel room for not paying the rent. My mother refused to send me any more money. She wanted me to come home and had sent me a return steamship ticket, which I was trying to sell. When Beano heard of my troubles, he invited me to move into his studio.

His studio was one of a row of carbarns, back of the Gare Montparnasse in a street called the Impasse Galliard. It was sixty feet long, forty high, and forty wide. Whoever had converted the place into a studio had spent very little money on the job. A skylight had been cut in the domed ceiling, and the car tracks had been covered with cheap pine flooring. That was all. Only our kind of artist would have lived in such a place.

The winter of '25 was a very cold one. Beano had an old potbellied stove that we kept white-hot, but of course it couldn't begin to heat that enormous room. It had a hard time taking the chill off the corner in which it stood. The tenant who had lived in the place before Beano had left behind a Belgian girl. She was a gross, blowsy creature, shaped like the stove. She gave off a lot of animal heat, but neither of us wanted to go near her. There was still a third heating agent—alcohol. We drank it continuously and so managed to stay alive.

Beano worked, but the girl and I only hugged the stove. She found it too cold in the streets for her profession. I couldn't punch the typewriter without taking off my gloves and I didn't dare take them off. I might have lost a finger. But Beano worked, or, at least, tried to.

I watched him and saw at once that something was wrong. He never finished anything. He spent hours on a head, using sheet after sheet of expensive drawing paper, without making a single sketch that satisfied him. He blocked in the features; then, with a sudden curse, he ripped the paper from the board and crumpled it viciously. Ten minutes later, he tacked up another sheet and began again. A few lines this time, and again the curses and the frantic destruction.

I watched this go on for days. It was pathetic. Here was a man who could talk a whole gallery full of art works and who looked like a genius yet couldn't draw worth a damn.

When I asked him why he didn't go to art school, the very idea seemed to make him frantic. He swore at me for five minutes. He was against all schools. He was a genius, the equal of Michelangelo. He had examined the drawings produced in the schools and they stank. . . . Beano really had a great deal of taste and knew a bad drawing when he saw one. Maybe that's why he never finished any of his own.

One day he came home with a crate of chisels, a dozen mauls, and a truckload of marble blocks. He had a new idea. All spontaneity was lost when a sculptor worked from a drawing.

He should work directly in stone. He must see the living thing in the stone and strive to chop it free.

Whatever it was he saw in the stone, he couldn't chop it free. He stared at a piece of marble for a long time, then suddenly began to hack at it. The chisel always slipped or the marble cracked before he had taken twenty strokes. He then would go berserk and attack the block directly with the maul until he had shattered it or driven it right through the flooring.

He certainly could hit a terrific wallop. A little later, he would take a fresh stone and begin again. But the end was always the same.

When he had destroyed the whole truckload of marble, he went on a drunk. I tagged along to keep him out of trouble.

One night, although he had a very big load on, he stepped out of character and talked sense. It was the first time he had ever stepped out of character with me. He said that he was worried because one of Mr. Oscar Hahn's scouts intended to visit his studio soon and would want to see what progress he had made. He had nothing to show for the past year, not a single drawing. His scholarship would surely be cancelled. He was a great sculptor all right, but he needed time to develop, to find himself. If they took away his scholarship, he would have to go back to the coal barges.

There was so much pathos and real, quivering fear in his manner that I started to put my arm around his shoulders, but before I could finish the gesture he stepped back into character. He became the old Beano again, the mad genius, a carver of heroes, a stark, earthy elemental force. "Michael Angelo," he roared, as though he were calling a hog of that name on the Kansas prairies. "Michael Angelo . . ."

Then he collapsed. Several of the more friendly waiters helped me get him into a cab. When we arrived at the studio, the Belgian helped me put him to bed. As she said herself, often, it was her métier.

The next few days Beano stayed fairly sober, drinking only enough to keep warm. He was busy buying books, anatomy books. When he had accumulated about fifty volumes, he began to study them. Then he set up his board and started to draw once more. He tried to copy the illustrations. He spent almost a week on a drawing that showed how a head is built up in layers from a skull and another week on one that showed the bone, tendons, and muscles of an arm. But it was no use. He just couldn't draw worth a damn. I was lucky to be out when he finally had his frenzy. I came home to find the floor littered with pages and big holes in the wall plaster where the books had struck. The Belgian had a black eye. She had stopped a flying book.

A few days later, Beano received a note from Mr. Simonsohn, Mr. Oscar Hahn's agent, saying that he would be in the following month to examine what Beano had produced in the way of art. I was surprised to see that Beano was not as disturbed as he had been. In lieu of work, he told me, he would overwhelm the man with a brilliant idea. After all, they had given him the scholarship originally because of an idea and without seeing any work.

I was dozing near the stove one afternoon when Beano knocked me to the floor with a wallop between the shoulder blades. He stood over me, yelling, "I've got it! I've got it!"

"You've got what?" I asked.

"The idea!" he bellowed.

Without letting me get up from the floor, he explained the "idea." While he talked, I kept wondering whether Mr. Simonsohn would swallow his nonsense. I knew it wasn't entirely impossible. Beano put so much passion into his exposition and used so many brilliant gestures that he almost convinced me. He would have made a great actor.

Minus the passion and the rest of the fireworks, his "idea" went something like this: He had discovered—or decided—that all the anatomy books were wrong, because they used a man only five feet ten inches tall for their charts. Some used a man even shorter. They should have used a man six feet tall, because the perfect modern man is six feet tall. Since the anatomy of all modern sculpture is based on these books, all modern sculpture is wrong. Merely enlarging the charts two inches would not correct the error, because a six-foot man is not only taller but different. A new anatomy book had to be written, and not until he had written it could he even think of drawing or sculpture.

I thought of a lot of objections but I didn't word any of them. He was in no mood for argument. I hoped Mr. Simonsohn would swallow the "idea," but I didn't worry about it. I had my own troubles. I was very busy trying to swindle my mother out of some money.

During the next few weeks, I saw very little of Beano. He left the carbarn very early in the morning, before I got up, and returned late at night. His clothes began to smell strongly of formaldehyde. Later I found out about the smell. He was spending all his time in the morgue on the lookout for a perfect, six-foot man. With a tape and a pair of calipers, he measured all the likely bodies that were brought in. Some influential friends of his had obtained permission for him to buy a corpse.

A SMALL TIN PARROT PIN

Next to the tiny bladeless windmill
of a saltshaker
on the black tablecloth
is my small tin parrot pin
bought from a bin,
75¢, cheap, but not pure tin—an alloy,
some plastic toy tin?
The actual pin, the pin that pins the pin,
will fall off soon,
and thus the parrot,
if I wear it, which I will,
on my lapel. I'll look down
and it'll be gone.
Let it be found by a child,
or someone sad, eyes
on the sidewalk, or what a prize
it would be for a packrat's nest.
My parrot's paint
is vivid: his head's red, bright yellow of breast
and belly, a stripe of green,
then purple, a soft
creamy purple, then bright—you know
the color—parrot-green
wing feathers. Tomorrow I think
I'll wear it on my blue shirt.
Tonight, someone whom I love
sleeps in the next room,
the room next to the room with the black tablecloth,
the saltshaker, the parrot pin.
She was very sleepy
and less impressed than I
with my parrot
with whom, with which
I am very pleased.

—THOMAS LUX

That winter, enormous crowds of Americans used to gather before dinner at the Dôme every evening for drinks. Although the café was very large, it was hard to get a table inside, and the late arrivals were forced to sit out on the terrace, huddled over a noxious salamander. The night that Beano found his man, I was sitting there trying to keep warm without being asphyxiated by the coke fumes. With me at the table were three other expatriates, artists all.

While we were sitting there, hawking and cusping over our drinks, a cab pulled in to the curb close by us. In it was Beano. He stuck his head out the window and shouted. "Eureka!"

"What?" one of us called back.

"Eureka! I've got him!"

"You've got what?"

"The six-foot man."

"Come over and have a drink," I said without much enthusiasm.

Beano refused. He had to go home and build an icebox in which to hang the stiff. When no one urged him, however, he changed his mind about the drink and came over to the table. The cab remained at the curb.

We greeted him apathetically. He had been shouting his "idea" at us for weeks and we were sick of it. After all, it is only natural for a man's own poses to interest him more than they do his friends. Our mistake was that we took his madness for the same kind as our own.

Beano showed that he was hurt by our lack of interest. He sulked. In order to cheer him up, I asked where the stiff was.

"Out in the cab," he answered.

"What?"

He laughed happily at our amazement, and went on to explain.

About an hour ago, he had been standing near the door of the morgue embalming room when a corpse was wheeled out. It was that of a dead sailor who had been fished from the Seine. The stiff had already been put aside for some medical school, but he insisted on measuring it. When he found that it fit his requirements perfectly, he persuaded the official in charge to sell it to him. The morgue people wanted to send it to his studio in an ambulance. The cost was too high, so he said he would take it home in a cab. They were horrified, but he kicked up so much fuss that they finally agreed, just to get rid of him. He had them rope its head between its knees to make the bundle compact, then wrap it in heavy paper.

Beano produced a bill of sale and made us all examine it. The document was on the stationery of the city morgue, and covered with tax stamps. Then he invited us out to the cab to see for ourselves. We went. On the back seat lay an enormous bundle wrapped in heavy brown paper. Beano tore a large hole in the paper and we looked through it. I saw a bare, muscular shoulder and part of a sunburned neck. A pale-blue color was just beginning to come through the tan.

We returned to our table. We all felt kind of queasy and subdued, but not Beano. He was in great form. He gestured and roared—the "man of the renaissance." He demanded that the waiter bring him a fresh bottle of brandy and a tumbler.

He pushed the tumbler aside and drank out of the bottle, wiping his mouth with a gesture that Titian might have envied.

He pounded on the table and talked, not to us but to the café in general. He made a speech about his new anatomy book and his six-foot man. A crowd gathered to listen to him. All those who understood what he was talking about went out to the cab to inspect the stiff. In their eagerness, they tore at the wrapping paper until the body was completely naked.

Suddenly a woman screamed. The sound came from near the cab and I turned to look. I saw a middle-aged lady in a mink coat. She stood on the curb near the cab and swayed as though she were going to faint while from her mouth came a series of short, gasping screams. She sounded a lot like the steam whistle of a factory.

I knew what had happened. Thinking the cab free, she had opened the door and had started to get in.

Two cops came running across the street from the Select. The lady pointed—she didn't want to stop screaming—to the corpse. When the cops saw it, they got excited and started to argue with each other like a pair of stage Italians. Then Beano turned and saw what was happening. He ran into the street with us after him.

He acknowledged ownership of the stiff and said that the lady who was still screaming was a damned hypocrite who probably knew a lot worse-looking and deader men intimately. The cops called him a murderer and a necrophile, among other things. They wouldn't look at the bill of sale. He began to get sore. When one of the cops made a grab for him, he hauled off and knocked the man into the gutter.

That was very bad. The other cop got out his whistle and blew it and more cops came running from all sides. They piled all over Beano and soon had him trussed up. One of them went into the café to call a patrol wagon. I tried to argue with the sergeant, but he shoved me away.

The police wrapped the stiff in a tablecloth and put it into the wagon, then hustled Beano in after it. We could hear him hollering that if they so much as damaged a single hair on the head of his property, he would sue the city, have them broken, have them walking a beat in Passy, etc., etc. We piled into a taxi and followed the wagon to the station house.

When we got there, Beano was standing in front of the bench with a cop on either side of him, and the corpse was stretched out on the floor under the tablecloth. Behind the bench was a police magistrate. He wasn't the usual run of police official but a jovial, smiling little man, smoking a pipe with a silver top. He looked very intelligent and I thought he might give Beano a break. As it turned out, however, Beano would have been a great deal better off if the magistrate had been stupid.

The sergeant made the charges; they were murder and assaulting and injuring an officer. The magistrate grinned and said he would hear the more serious charge first, that of injuring a policeman; the murder charge could wait. He laughed at his own joke and looked at us. We smiled back to get in with him, but we all knew it was no joke. As a foreigner, the best Beano could hope for was deportation without a jail sentence. The deportation was certain, and he stood a fine chance of going to jail for a few months into the bargain. There goes his scholarship, I thought; he'll be back on the barges in no time now.

All the cops—there were about ten of them—swore they had witnessed the assault; even the one who had driven the patrol wagon swore to it. Then the magistrate let Beano talk. His defense was a very lame one, but he didn't seem to know it. He admitted that he had punched the cop, but claimed that he had done it in defense of his lawful possessions. The cop had tried to steal his corpse. He had been only defending his property, an inalienable right respected in all civilized countries. Beano then brought out his bill of sale.

The magistrate was delighted with Beano's argument. He kept grinning and wiping the top of his bald head. When Beano had finished, he called the morgue and checked the purchase. He dismissed the murder charge but said that he had to hold Beano for assault. I stepped forward and asked him to set bail. He refused. Beano turned on me and told me to mind my own business. Going to jail didn't seem to bother him in the least. All that worried him was what they were going to do with his stiff.

The magistrate answered that he would have it sent back to the morgue. This made Beano frantic, and he began to plead. He made a speech. He told the magistrate about his new anatomy book and begged him not to take the stiff away. If he did, the magistrate's name would go down in history as the man who put back the clock of art, the man who frustrated the genius of Beano Walsh.

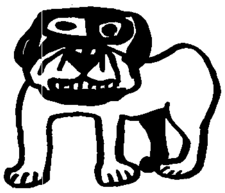
The magistrate listened to all this with a broad grin on his face. He was very much amused and having one hell of a time. When Beano had finished, he made a speech. First he talked about Lafayette and Pershing, then about how much the French love art. Paris, he said, was the only city in the world where even the cops loved art. He, himself, although only a police magistrate, liked nothing better than to stroll through the Louvre. He was a true art lover. Under no circumstance did he want to risk becoming notorious as the man who had hindered the progress of art. He wound up by saying that Beano would not be separated from his beloved corpse, not for a second, no, he would have it put in the same cell with him.

Beano thanked him and said that he would remember the magistrate all his life because he had acted like a true Frenchman.

Then he asked if he could speak to me alone for a few seconds. The magistrate gave him permission.

"For Christ's sake," I whispered to him, "let him send that stiff back to the morgue."

He grinned at me. "No," he said. "Listen to me, and do what I say. I'll beat the rap, just you watch, and I'll get that scholarship renewed into the bargain. Call Simonsohn, Mr. Hahn's man, at the Hotel Royale, and tell him what happened. Have him here in the morning. Then get me a large block of drawing paper and have it sent into my cell. I've got pencils."



I tried to argue with him, but it was no use. He just grinned. The last thing he said was "A stove boat, my friend, or a dead whale." When the jailor led him off, he winked at me. Two cops put the stiff on a sort of wheelbarrow and trundled it after him.

We said goodbye to the magistrate, who was still laughing, and went outside to a café that had a telephone. One of the other guys went to buy drawing paper while I called up Mr. Simonsohn. I told him that Beano was in jail and explained what had happened. He seemed very cold, but promised to be at the station house with a French lawyer in time for the trial.

When I arrived at the station house, early the next morning, no one was there except a sergeant and the turnkey. I asked to see Beano, but the officer in charge refused to give me permission. The magistrate had left orders that absolutely no one was to go into his cell, not even the police. The officer was called away and I approached the turnkey. I gave him a twenty-franc note and he was very friendly. He had seen Beano when he went to the cell to give him the drawing paper we had bought, but not since then. After some hesitation, he told me that my friend had made a lot of noise around three o'clock that morning, but that he had not investigated because of the magistrate's orders. The orders were unusual, he admitted, but he guessed that the idea was to give Beano a good scare by making him spend a night in a cell with a corpse.

When the magistrate came in, I had to stop questioning the turnkey. Soon afterward, a group of our friends arrived; then Mr. Simonsohn came in with a French lawyer. The lawyer was an ex-judge and knew the magistrate well. They went off together to the magistrate's private office. I went over to speak to Mr. Simonsohn. He asked me to explain what had happened.

I did my best to make the theory of the six-foot man sound as reasonable and as impressive as possible by telling it in Beano's words, but I couldn't get his passion into it. I was worrying about the scholarship. Although I made a hash of it, Mr. Simonsohn seemed impressed and was quite sympathetic. He even sighed with pleasure when I had finished: "Ah, you artists!"

When he started to talk I found out why his manner had changed so much since last night when I had talked to him over the phone. Soon after I called, a squad of reporters had arrived at his hotel and had demanded to know all about Beano and the Oscar Hahn Foundation. As secretary of the foundation, he had been quoted extensively, and some of this morning's papers had run his picture. He showed me the pictures with a great deal of pride. I realized that Beano had put it over and that he was a cinch for a renewal of the scholarship.

I asked Mr. Simonsohn what the lawyer intended to do about the assault charge. He said that if it couldn't be fixed with the magistrate for a suspended sentence, they would plead temporary insanity and send Beano to the country for a week.

While we talked, the little police court filled with people—reporters, photographers, Americans, and the merely curious. The magistrate was very much impressed. When the turnkey left to bring in the prisoner, he permitted Mr. Simonsohn, the lawyer, several reporters, and myself to go along. I walked in front of the procession—it was almost a triumphal one—with the turnkey. We moved fast and soon got some distance ahead of the others. The turnkey told me that Beano was in a special cell reserved for drunks and other violent folks which was separated from the main block by a long corridor. When we came in sight of it, I called out, "We're here, Beano!" My idea was to warn him, but when he didn't answer I had a premonition that something was wrong. I broke into a run with the turnkey after me.

I got there first and peered through the bars. The cell was full of deep shadow and I couldn't see anything. All I got was a strong whiff of formaldehyde and another smell, an acid, which I didn't recognize. The turnkey opened the door and I popped in ahead of him while he was taking the key out of the lock. I took a quick glance around but didn't see the prisoner. "He's gone," I blurted out. The turnkey took a look and acted fast. He forced back the others, who had just come up, and slammed the door with me inside, then ran to turn in the alarm.

Along one wall of the cell was a wooden bench with a mattress and pillow and on it lay the stiff. He was in terrible condition, broken and torn. One of his arms had been skinned out and the muscles, bone, and sinew exposed. A penknife was sticking in his chest and there were great wounds in his belly from which stained wads of cotton protruded. The floor was covered with drawing paper. I picked up a sheet and examined it. I saw that Beano had been trying to draw the skinned arm. It was an anatomical drawing, but very crude. A child might have done better.

Then I spotted Beano. He was under the bench and partially hidden by the legs of the stiff, which hung down.

He lay huddled up in one corner with his face to the wall.

"Beano," I hollered at him, "for Christ's sake come out of there." He didn't move, so I prodded him with my foot. "That's enough," I said, getting sore. "Snap out of it. You've beaten the rap and Simonsohn told me he would renew the scholarship." I pleaded with him, "Please, Beano, please." But he neither moved nor spoke.

When the turnkey and the cops burst into the cell, I pointed him out to them. They reached under the bench and hauled him into the middle of the room. His eyes were open and he was wearing his derby hat, but he couldn't, or wouldn't, stand on his feet. He didn't say a word. As they dragged him by me, I thought at the time that he winked but I'm not sure now.

He beat the rap, all right. They didn't even arraign him on the charges. And he got the scholarship renewed, too—at least, the Hahn Foundation still supported him.

Mr. Simonsohn sent him to the country, and after he had been there a week I went to visit him. It was a hospital disguised as a motel. I saw the doctor in charge and got permission to visit him. An orderly showed me to his room. It was a tiny place, a cell in fact, much like the one in the station house. Beano was still wearing his derby but the rest of his clothes had been changed for a bathrobe and carpet slippers.

"Hello, Beano," I said.

He didn't answer.

I laughed awkwardly. "Cut it out," I said. "You've gotten everything you wanted. Snap out of it. What the hell more do you want?"

He gave no sign that he had heard me. I went on talking, but nothing I said seemed to make any impression on him. He just sat on the bed and stared at me. When I found myself shouting hysterically at him, I got up to leave. I turned back for a last time, and said, "All right, Beano, if you won't say anything, at least wink at me." He didn't move.

I went back to see the doctor. I was determined to give the game away. "He's a fake," I blurted out as soon as I got to the doctor's office. "The whole thing is a swindle. He's not crazy. He's putting it on to fool the police."

The doctor heard me out, and when I had finished he said quite calmly, "That's what we thought when he arrived. The board of this hospital now feels certain that he is crazy. He's insane and will never leave an asylum again in his life."

I tried to argue.

"Listen," the doctor said, losing patience, "your friend simulated insanity in order to get by as a sane man. The insane are sometimes very clever, you know. He's an insane man who knows he's insane. I'm almost certain he must have been in a hospital before. Instead of hiding his disease, which would be the obvious thing to do, he hid only part of it, the more serious part, and used the part he exposed to hide the rest. But he's really crazy, and he went too far with it."

All the way back to Paris in the train, I kept wondering about the doctor and almost came to the conclusion that it was he who was crazy. But he must have been right, because Beano is still in an asylum. ♦

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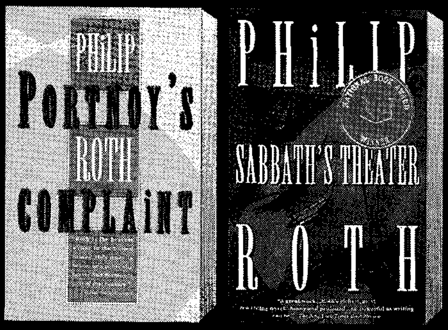

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BOOKS

PURSUER AND PURSUED

The still untold story of Cary Grant.

BY BRENDAN GILL

A COUPLE of books about Cary Grant have just come out. I suppose there will always be a couple of books about Cary Grant just coming out, and why not? He deserves, and will deserve, attention; the difficulty faced by the scrupulous biographer is to find something new to say. This difficulty has been increased by the thoroughness of the research manifested in "Cary Grant: A Class Apart" (Columbia; $24.95), by Graham McCann, who teaches at King's College, Cambridge, and has written books about Marilyn Monroe and Woody Allen. I have to say, however, that, diligent as Mr. McCann may be at digging up the past, he is not very good at subtitles. "A Class Apart" has the look of being intended as a come-on to potential readers, but as such it is the merest wraith: every movie star is a class apart, it being precisely his apartness that makes him a star. A second meaning of the subtitle is that of social origin, with Grant emerging from the depths of the British working class and inventing a pseudo upper class, neither British nor American, of which he himself is the only known member.

I praise McCann for his research but not for the nature of his approach to his subject or for his insights into Grant's character. He is so chummy in his admiration as to be almost cheeky, almost patronizing. He marvels breathlessly throughout the book at the series of transformations by means of which the moderately rough-hewn young Archie Leach, of Bristol, England, succeeded in becoming the smooth and supple Cary Grant of Hollywood. In truth, such transformations are not at all uncommon, especially in the theatre. Noël Coward, one of the figures on whom Grant admitted that he had modelled himself, is among the scores of actors and dramatists who have sedulously promoted themselves from one social class to another. Additional impressive examples abound, including, of course, Shakespeare, who, having grown rich in London, bought the second-largest house in Stratford and a coat of arms to go with it. As for skinny little Molière, always in need of being fattened up, his incomparable feat of social climbing consisted of his being fed by the hand of the Sun King.

As for McCann's insights, the best of them are borrowed—with a scholar's conscientious attributions—from other writers. But perhaps the oddest thing about the book is his gingerliness in respect to Grant's sexual disposition. In a prim, old-maidish fashion, McCann cannot bear Grant to be anything but ruggedly heterosexual, and he goes to great lengths to derogate anyone who dares to suggest otherwise.

This is to assume the same hypocritical posture that was once the universal rule in Hollywood in respect to the private lives of the people—actors, directors, screenwriters, and designers—who make up the so-called "creative" side of the movie industry. It is a posture that remains formally de rigueur but is beginning to show signs of sagging. In the old days, the truculent tycoons who ran the studios tried to impose on their actors, under the threat of summary dismissal, domestic arrangements that with sanctimonious hypocrisy they pretended to believe were the norm for those wholesome American citizens who flocked to the movies at a rate of almost a hundred million a week and kept the industry booming. Egged on by an assortment of Mrs. Grundys of both sexes and by clergymen expressing the usual pieties, studio heads asserted that adultery, homosexuality, and other infamous sexual activities would cause the American heartland to boycott movies featuring actors base enough to practice them.

In 1975, Pauline Kael wrote in these pages a celebrated Profile of Grant, nearly every word of which implied, in my judgment, that Grant's homosexuality—or, more accurately, his bisexuality—was an indispensable attribute of his professional success. Kael makes no direct reference to either homosexuality or bisexuality, though she hints at a personal relationship between Grant and Randolph Scott, as made fleetingly manifest in an exchange of glances in "My Favorite Wife." Kael writes, "The presence in the cast of his close friend Randolph Scott (they shared a house for several years) may have interfered with his concentration." A few weeks ago, I asked Kael why in her Profile of Grant she had kept so nearly silent regarding his sexual nature, and her answer was that at the time Grant was alive, and still obliged to uphold the Hollywood taboos that had made denial a necessity throughout his career. "Moreover," Kael said, "I have always had great confidence in allusiveness."

The difficulty, as Kael would agree, is that allusiveness will not serve when biographers falsify a man's life, to say nothing of his artistry, by insisting upon a state of affairs directly at odds with the facts and thus rendering both his life and his artistry inexplicable. Like the recognized ability of actors throughout history to move upward socially, homosexuality and bisexuality are historically a commonplace in the theatre—and far more openly so, it is fair to say, in the British theatre than in the American.

IN 1918, when Archie Leach was fourteen, he abandoned with relief any attempt to acquire a formal education. Already stagestruck, he was, to his delight, invited to join a troupe of acrobatic dancers and stiltwalkers called Bob Pender's Knockabout Comedians. The troupe, consisting of twelve teen-age boys, played in music halls all over England, and the apprenticeship that Archie served with the troupe gave him the physical presence and grace of movement that became major characteristics

"Everyone wishes to be Cary Grant. Even I wish to be Cary Grant." The actor with Kim Novak at Cannes, in 1959.

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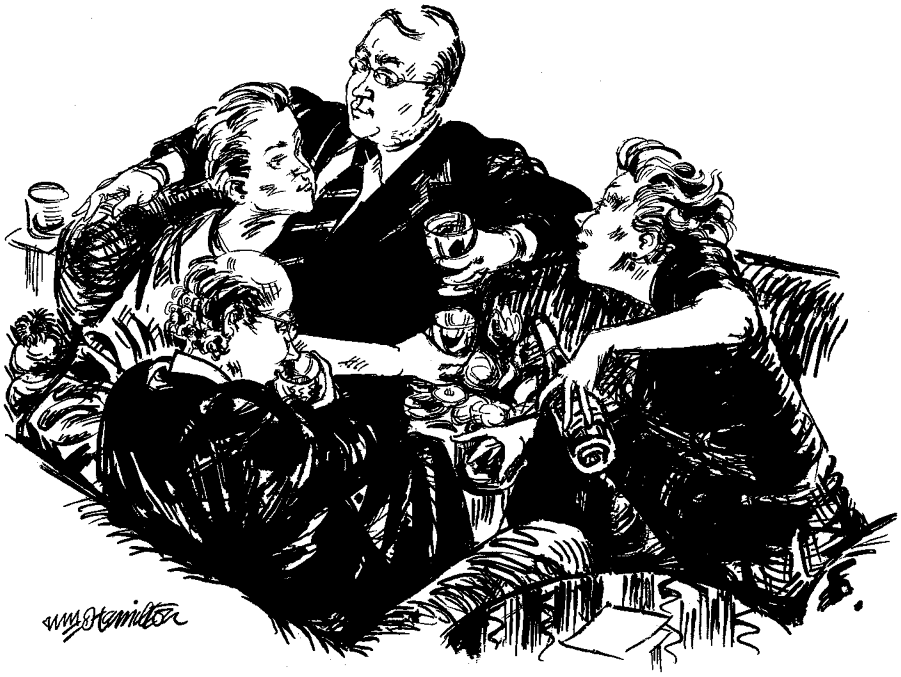

"It's so much easier now that the children are our age."

• •

of the mature Cary Grant—characteristics that he admired in another of his early models, the agile and debonair Douglas Fairbanks. (It was in deliberate imitation of Fairbanks that Grant, throughout his life, kept himself well tanned.)

In 1920, the Knockabout Comedians were booked to play at New York's Hippodrome, a vaudeville house with more than five thousand seats. They enjoyed a long run there, after which they toured most of the country. A couple of years later, when the troupe was ready to return to England, Archie and some of the other boys decided to remain behind. Archie found jobs, so he later wrote, stiltwalking at Coney Island and selling neckties in Greenwich Village. Some of the Knockabout boys, including Archie, decided to form a new troupe, and, under new management and a new name, they again embarked on a national tour, playing one-night stands "in practically every small town in the country." From vaudeville Archie progressed to musical comedy and operetta; signed to a contract by the Shubert Brothers, he spent three years in a succession of Shubert extravaganzas. Paramount screen-tested Archie at its Astoria studios and rejected him on the ground of his having a thick neck and bowlegs. Changing its opinion two years later, it cast him in his first movie—a one-reeler called "Singapore Sue." Soon afterward, he made his first Broadway appearance as a non-acrobat and non-singer, in the role of a character named Cary Lockwood, supporting Fay Wray in a play by Wray's husband, John Monk Saunders. The play flopped, but no matter: by then Archie Leach was well on his way both professionally and socially, frequenting the Algonquin, becoming friends with Moss Hart and other literary lights, and dining out in what was beginning to take shape as café society.

After a decade or so of seasoning as an American (though he remained a British citizen until 1942, shortly before his marriage to Barbara Hutton), Archie thought it time to venture west to Hollywood. It was 1931, the depths of the Great Depression, but he soon found work at Paramount's West Coast studio, at the considerable salary of four hundred and fifty dollars a week. The studio required him to take a new name. He plucked the name Cary from the Saunders play and the name Grant from a list provided by the studio, which had objected to the name Lockwood as being already in use by another actor. Archie Leach thereupon vanished into a succession of rapidly evolving Cary Grants—Paramount, bent on getting its money's worth, cast him in seven pictures during the first year of his contract—and by the time he had become his own master, free to star in any movie he chose, he was able to write, "Everyone wishes to be Cary Grant. Even I wish to be Cary Grant." Nor was this in the least a narcissistic self-appraisal; it was a confession of his yearning to be in person what he portrayed onscreen—a fictional ideal that led him to marry so many times, to experiment at length with LSD, and to be, by his own account, a tiresomely nitpicking perfectionist in respect to other people's manners, amount of education, and neatness in housekeeping. The suave and carefree onscreen Grant was, he ruefully acknowledged, in many respects the opposite of who he actually was. A fussbudget on a movie set or at home—never a chair out of place—he was also miserly: he agonized over spending money and left an estate said to amount to seventy or eighty million dollars.

McCann constantly quotes Kael on Grant's acting technique without understanding what it is that she is analyzing. She says of Grant in performance that "he must be the most publicly seduced male the world has ever known," and goes on, "Being the pursued doesn't make him seem weak or passively soft. It makes him glamorous—and, since he is not as available as other men, the far more desirable. . . . When he and a woman are together, they can laugh at each other and at themselves." What Kael is describing is Grant carrying out a bisexual parody that is comical precisely because it is a parody—a genial mocking of the conventional heterosexual relationship.

In Noël Coward's "Private Lives," it is the acting out of a pretense of heterosexuality by Elyot Chase, so incomparably well played by Coward himself, that makes the play one of the most successful farces in our dramatic literature. Lovemaking in Coward's plays consists of having fun (note especially "Design for Living") and not in actually making love, and this was the case also with Grant's roles in the marvellous helter-skelter comedies in which he appeared alongside Irene Dunne, Katharine Hepburn, and Rosalind Russell. He was indeed alongside those desirable women, and welcomely so, but I imagine him flinching whenever the part assigned to him required him to go to bed with them. In this respect, he was, as Kael points out, the opposite of Clark Gable. The predatory characters that Gable played never had anything but bed in mind and were quick to let their all too contented victims know it.

Grant is a superb romantic comedian because of his emphasis upon comedy, and not romance. (What other screen lover ever risked so many physical gags in the form of somersaults and pratfalls?) He is nearly always in amused retreat from a woman who, whether consciously or unconsciously, is aggressively pursuing him and is right in supposing that in the end he will prove worthy of her pursuit.

In real life, Grant was obliged by studio fiat to endure a quasi-comic role not unlike the roles he played onscreen. The New York photographer Jerome Zerbe, who, strikingly handsome and flirtatious, was a lover of both Grant and Scott, used to tell me of how Grant and he in the nineteen-thirties were obliged to honor the prevailing Hollywood taboos and at the same time generate favorable publicity in movie magazines and among Grant's doting fan clubs. To that end, Grant was reported in the press to be enjoying an impassioned affair with the starlet Betty Furness. Night after night, he took the good-natured Furness out to dinner and returned her to her apartment promptly at ten o'clock, after which Zerbe and he and assorted companions went out on the town.

Between 1931 and 1966, Grant made a total of seventy-two movies, and even in the ones that failed (as many of them did, and with good reason) his high spirits and his generosity in sharing a scene with his fellow-actors were notable. He had successfully become the Cary Grant of his imagination and was, so to speak, at home inside his creation. But not always and not quite. In his prime, he refused to be honored by the Film Society of Lincoln Center at its annual gala. As chairman of the board of the society at the time, I begged him to change his mind, but he insisted that he couldn't possibly do so, claiming that the thought of having to address such a distinguished audience would make him sick to his stomach for weeks beforehand.

Almost twenty years after Grant

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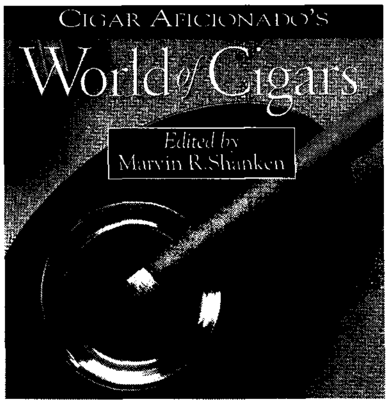

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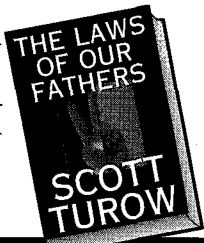

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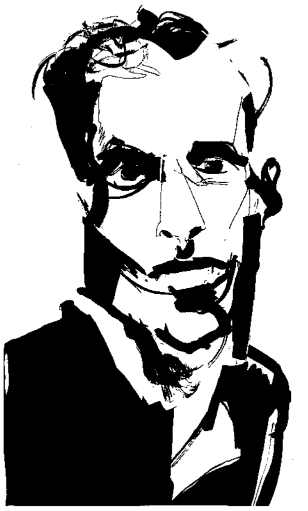
stopped making movies, he went on the road in a series of personal appearances that were not unlike the barnstorming tours of his youth. And he was happy doing so, showing off before his fifth wife and the young daughter he had fathered with his fourth wife, Dyan Cannon. When, in 1986, at the age of eighty-two, handsomer than ever and seemingly in excellent health, Grant died, of a massive stroke, the world was astonished to learn of the place in which he died—the little town of Davenport, Iowa. His death was sad—surely no contemporary actor has been more sincerely mourned by his public—but it was also, in a classic sense, comic: to die in the Corn Belt was a typical hard-earned knockabout Archie Leach pratfall.

THE other newly published book about Grant, which is entitled "Dark Angel" (Arcade; $29.95) and is the handiwork of Geoffrey Wansell, is coffee-table in size and is crammed with irresistible photographs. Mr. Wansell wrote a biography of Grant some fifteen years ago, at a time when, according to his preface, "I don't think I appreciated fully the marvellous subtlety of his talent." This second attempt, also a failure of appreciation, boasts a title that is as maladroit as McCann's subtitle, and that, except for the color of Grant's hair during the first fifty or sixty years of his life, proves to have little connection with the text. We are given the usual facts, drawn from the usual sources, and again and again we are told of Grant's unquenchable desire for women. Not very felicitously, the author notes that Grant had "an eye for a pretty girl," that in age "his attraction to beautiful women had never dimmed," and that he hadn't "lost his appetite for the company of pretty young women"—the pretty young woman in question being Maureen Donaldson, a girlfriend at the time, who was forty-five years his junior. Poor Cary Grant! What about all the men he was attracted to in his youth and with whom he sought to form permanent relationships, always in vain? The story of that struggle, often heartbreaking, remains to be told. ◆

PROUST DIED FOR YOU

The long road to a novel.

BY JOHN UPDIKE



Alain de Botton

RICCARDO VECCHIO

ALAIN DE BOTTON, the author of "How Proust Can Change Your Life" (Pantheon; $19.95), is described on the dust jacket as living in London and Washington, but his name and his passion for codification savor strongly of the Gallic. His curious, humorous, didactic, and dazzling book bears the subtitle "Not a Novel"; it contains, however, more human interest and play of fancy than most fiction. Its discourse, broken into such instructive chapters as "How to Love Life Today," "How to Suffer Successfully," and "How to Open Your Eyes," elucidates the lessons of a novel, "Remembrance of Things Past," by Marcel Proust. De Botton has plainly spent much time within that great work and, further, has made himself privy to many minutiae concerning Proust himself. We learn, for instance, that Proust's Paris telephone number was 29205; that he often tipped not fifteen or twenty per cent but two hundred per cent of a restaurant bill; that his skin was so sensitive he couldn't use soap but would wash with "finely woven, moistened towels, then pat himself dry with fresh linen (an average wash requires twenty towels, which Proust specifies must be taken to the only laundry that uses the right non-irritant powder, the blanchisserie Lavigne, which also does Jean Cocteau's laundry)"; that he was so attached to his mother that, though past the age of thirty, he gave her detailed reports on his sleep, his "peeing," and his bowel movements; that he was always cold and often kept his fur coat on during dinner parties. We also learn some facts about Proust's close relatives: his father, Dr. Adrien Proust, wrote thirty-four books of his own, including some well-known manuals on hygiene and physical fitness; Marcel's younger brother, Dr. Robert Proust, the author of "The Surgery of the Female Genitalia," was so celebrated for his prostatectomies that in the trade they were called "proustatectomies," and was so hardy that he survived being run over by a five-ton coal wagon.

Such details are not idly marshalled. After depicting Marcel's sensitivity, so extreme as to be grotesque, de Botton makes the point that "feeling things (which usually means feeling them *painfully*) is at some level linked to the acquisition of knowledge." Proust puts it: "Happiness is good for the body, but it is grief which develops the strengths of the mind." The painter Elstir, in the novel, formulates the principle thus: "We cannot be taught wisdom, we have to discover it for ourselves by a journey which no one can undertake for us, an effort which no one can spare us." De Botton examines five Proustian characters who suffer *un*successfully, concocting false solutions to their discomforts which in fact prolong them. The chapters "How to Be a Good Friend" and "How to Put Books Down" show from passages in Proust's novel and life how a realistic, even cynical estimate of the value of friendship can fitly support extravagant efforts of cordiality and flattery (his friends coined "the verb *to proustify* to express a slightly too conscious attitude of geniality, together with what would vulgarly have been called affectations, interminable and delicious"), and how the most passionate devotion to an author, such as Proust paid to John Ruskin, properly stops short of idolatry, as when Proust concluded that Ruskin was frequently "silly, maniacal, constraining, false and ridiculous." De Botton writes as one narrowly saved from idolatry; he wryly describes a pilgrimage he made to the drab village of Illiers, now called on road signs "Illiers-Combray" in tribute to Proust's enchanted fictional village. Madeleine sales are brisk there, and the house of Proust's Tante Amiot (Tante Léonie in the novel) re-creates "in its full aesthetic horror the feel of a tastelessly furnished, provincial bourgeois nineteenth-century home." The "solitary, curiously oily-looking madeleine" on display reveals itself, upon scrupulous inspection, to be plastic.

De Botton writes in English but with French wit and dispassion. His second book, "The Romantic Movement," was a novel analyzing in terms of self-help the amorous delusions illustrated by a London affair. His penchant for aphoristic laws of human behavior understandably draws him to Proust, since such laws are Proust's own goal. This son and brother of doctors wrote a novel full of closely diagnostic observations, a novel that presents, over all, in its demonstration of involuntary memory and its recovery of the past, a cure for the universal malady, time. The reader emerges from the last pages of the last volume, "Time Regained," with a sensation of having triumphantly undergone therapy. Composed as an act of personal salvation by a desperately frail and neurasthenic man, the work embodies his cure—the discovery of his message as a writer. De Botton vividly sketches his hero's sad condition prior to this discovery. Proust's own appraisal of himself at the age of thirty ran, "Without pleasures, objectives, activities or ambitions, with the life ahead of me finished and with an awareness of the grief I cause my parents, I have little happiness." Kafka and Joyce, those other epic comedians of modernism, each at least had a circle of friends and critics who recognized his genius; even those closest to Proust saw him as a hopeless snob and dilettante, and were taken unawares by the beauty, sweep, and satiric force of his masterpiece. De Botton, in emphasizing, with his amusing but straight-faced pedagogical foppishness, Proust's healing, advisory aspects, does us the service of rereading him on our behalf, providing of that vast sacred lake a sweet and lucid distillation. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

After Hannibal, by Barry Unsworth (Talese/Doubleday; $22.95). In this elegantly constructed novel, five sets of outsiders invade Umbria by renovating houses along a country track. Trouble is made for them by local peasants and by an exploitative speculating Brit, but the real story is the way their various hopes and intrigues retrace ingrained historical patterns. Recognizing these patterns and, in a sense, presiding over them is an Italian lawyer so shrewd and wizardly that he seems supernatural.

Love Invents Us, by Amy Bloom (Random House; $21). Elizabeth Taube, who is only indifferently cared for by her well-off parents in Great Neck, is successively reinvented by the love of a decorously lecherous elderly furrier, a semi-blind widow, her ninth-grade English teacher, a high-school basketball star, and, finally, her young son, whom she recognizes as being homosexual. This writer gets more meaning into individual sentences than most authors manage in whole books. They are the kind of sentences you reread for sheer pleasure, and to feel a closeness to the characters which is like an embrace.

May Sarton, by Margot Peters (Knopf; $30). "Have you . . . despatched that goose May Sarton?" Virginia Woolf wrote to Elizabeth Bowen. This is the first biography of Sarton (1912-1995), the prolific author of a stream of unrelentingly minor poems, novels, and journals—among them "Plant Dreaming Deep" and "Mrs. Stevens Hears the Mermaids Singing." Peters shows with devastating precision that, contrary to the wise-woman persona Sarton cultivated in old age (which brought her throngs of admirers), she was often monstrously selfish, hurtful to those who loved her, and a sexual predator who wouldn't take no for an answer.

Niagara, by Pierre Berton (Kodansha; $27). This enjoyable book is less a history of the falls than a chronicle of those who have measured themselves against its prodigious force. Niagara has gradually become a tourist center and an invaluable source of hydroelectric power for the continent, but Berton's hair-raising accounts of the daredevils who have tested its power confirm the religious sense of awe that the first European explorers felt in the presence of the great cataract. The terrifying tale of Love Canal is only the most recent example of Niagara's impressive ability to bite back at the civilization that is continually tempted to exploit it.

André Malraux, by Curtis Cate (Fromm; $38.95). Cate brings both a useful perspective and new information to the life of a writer whose career elicited as much controversy as applause. Malraux expressed his loyalties in his famous novels "Man's Fate" and "Man's Hope" but he thought of himself as a man of action as much as a man of letters, improvising a bomber squadron for the Spanish Republic, joining the Resistance during the Second World War, and serving in de Gaulle's post-war government. All Malraux's performances, literary or political, were uneven, but Cate's steadfast common sense allows us to understand this personality of consistent inconsistency—part Peck's Bad Boy, part Joan of Arc.

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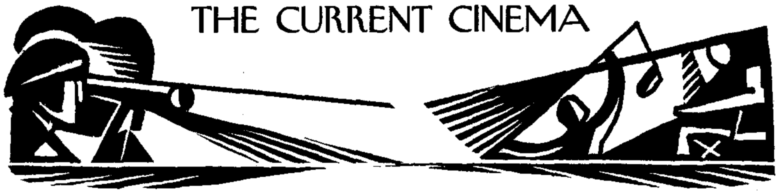
THE CURRENT CINEMA



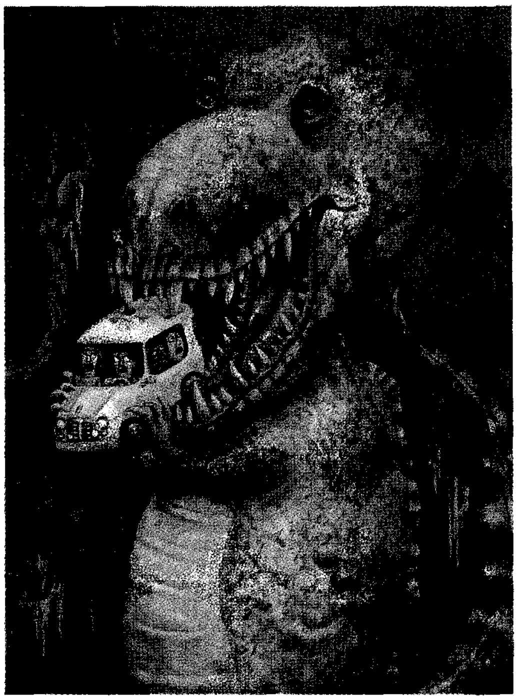
CHILD'S PLAY

Spielberg's return to Jurassic Park, and Clare Peploe's magic act.

BY TERRENCE RAFFERTY

THE first dinosaur we see in Steven Spielberg's "The Lost World: Jurassic Park" isn't a towering Tyrannosaurus rex or one of the toothy, agile velociraptors that made life so stressful for the characters in the original "Jurassic Park" (1993) but a compsognathus—a mere slip of a prehistoric carnivore. This tiny, spindly-legged animal introduces itself to a curious little girl on an island beach, and she is immediately charmed; the toylike creature might be a baby, lost and hungry and looking for a surrogate mommy to give it nourishment. As even the dimmest member of the audience suspects, the beast is indeed expecting a meal, and won't be satisfied with bread crumbs. Quickly, more compsognathuses skitter out of the bushes and form a ring around the child, watching her intently; they look like a gaggle of evil goslings—nightmare twins of the adorable orphans that followed Anna Paquin south in "Fly Away Home." Cut to the girl's parents, picnicking serenely down the beach; offscreen, high-pitched screams gradually become audible over the soothing roar of the waves.

The sick, casually terrifying opening puts the audience in a very good mood. We know that T. rexes and raptors will appear eventually, and this miniature-scale horror sequence is a perfect appetizer—tastier, in fact, than anything Spielberg served up in "Jurassic Park," which was a kind of all-you-can-eat buffet of monster-movie clichés, one whopping hunk of red meat after another. "The Lost World" has the visual wit that was the missing ingredient of the earlier film, and it makes the whole elaborate spread go down more easily. "Jurassic Park" seemed like the work of a Spielberg imitator, crudely and hastily copying the virtuosic scare effects of "Jaws": a cloning experiment gone horribly wrong. (Spielberg was shooting "Schindler's List" in Poland while supervising the editing of "Jurassic Park," and probably felt as overburdened as the Michael Keaton character in "Multiplicity," who had himself replicated so he could be in several places at once.) "The Lost World" is, at its best, unmistakably the product of a master craftsman, and one who, this time around, has found a way to amuse himself even as he cranks out a kind of movie that he has obviously outgrown. The creature-feature is child's play for Spielberg. But when he's as relaxed and alert as he is in "The Lost World" he reminds us that a clever child can get a lot of fun out of next to nothing.



T. rex enjoys light nourishment in "The Lost World."

What distinguishes "The Lost World" from its heavy-footed predecessor isn't so much the content as the tone. Spielberg, on his return trip to the land of the dino-

BLAIR DRAWSON

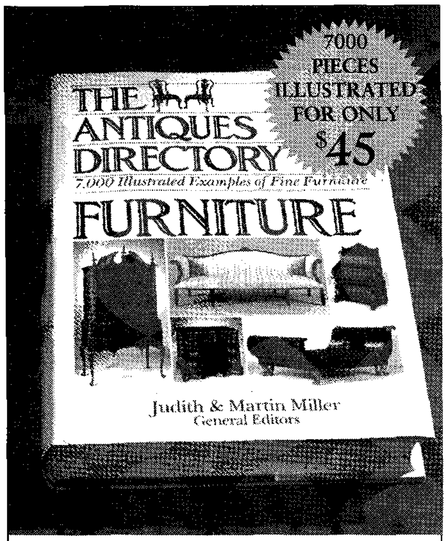
saurs, largely dispenses with the awestruck solemnity that weighed down "Jurassic Park," and replaces it with snappy showmanship of the teasing, self-aware sort that the opening sequence demonstrates: he plays on our eagerness to be frightened by his mechanical beasts, and manipulates our responses so effortlessly that we begin to laugh at how primitive they are. The screenplay, by David Koepp, takes little more than a slender premise from Michael Crichton's 1995 novel. Although Jurassic Park, the island tourist attraction stocked with cloned dinosaurs, is defunct and its out-of-control denizens are all dead, the neo-prehistoric creatures aren't quite extinct yet. There is, it turns out, *another* island, designated Site B, where the various reanimated species have been flourishing in the absence of human supervision. Jurassic Park's slightly chastened entrepreneur, John Hammond (Richard Attenborough), dispatches a small scientific team to study this unique ecosystem. Hammond's creepy nephew, Peter Ludlow (Arliss Howard), has meanwhile mounted a much larger expedition with a less benign objective: to capture specimens for a stadium-size Jurassic Park in San Diego.

Ludlow's project is, of course, just the sort of hilariously bad idea that monster movies depend on. Because we never *learn* (not even from movies), big predators keep running amok, gobbling greedy businessmen and cocky hunters, overturning bulky vehicles with the flick of a gigantic paw, and causing traffic accidents in major cities. The movie's hero, a chaos theorist named Ian Malcolm (Jeff Goldblum), who survived the first Jurassic Park disaster, gets a laugh early on with his incredulous reaction to Hammond's assertion "I'm not making the same mistakes this time": Malcolm replies, "No, you're making all *new* ones." The deep truth of the joke is that the mistakes really are old—at least as old as "King Kong"—and in "The Lost World" Spielberg wisely acknowledges that the turf he's treading isn't exactly virgin territory. As he guides us through the jungle of Site B, he takes care to point out movie landmarks: we speed along catching glimpses of "Kong," "Godzilla," Howard Hawks's "Hatari!" (in the hunting sequences), and even lightly self-parodic snippets of Spielberg's own past triumphs. (The hushed compsognathus sequence is a whimsical revision of the beginning of "Jaws," and Arliss Howard has been made up to resemble one of the Nazi villains of "Raiders of the Lost Ark.")

And by admitting so jauntily that his basic material is prehistoric—and that its unlikely survival should be the source not of awe but of self-deprecating laughter on the part of both filmmakers and viewers—Spielberg liberates himself from the grandiosity that fossilized his style in "Jurassic Park." He works like a great gagman here, as he did in "1941" and the first two Indiana Jones pictures, riffing freely on classic adventure-movie motifs—including a literal cliffhanger, staged and edited as brilliantly as any such sequence in film history. He never does quite solve the problem of making the lumbering T. rexes interesting; although he enlivens their appearances by shooting the scenes in the cheesy style of fifties Japanese monster movies, the big galoots still tend to slow the action down. But the leaping, pack-hunting raptors, who are withheld until late in the picture, look even more alarmingly energetic than they did in "Jurassic Park": their specialty number plays like a routine by a troupe of deranged comic acrobats. And although "The Lost World" won't persuade anybody that dinosaurs will ever walk among us again, Spielberg's slapstick action sequences can almost make you believe something fully as preposterous: that vaudeville isn't dead.

IN the first scene of Clare Peploe's nutty, buoyant "Rough Magic," a white rabbit hops blithely into the elevator of a swanky building and is retrieved a few seconds later by a beautiful young woman wearing a top hat, high heels, black net stockings, and what appears to be a skimpy, spangly sort of swimsuit. This is Myra (Bridget Fonda), a magician's assistant, dressed in the uniform of her odd trade. Her boss, an avuncular illusionist (played by Kenneth Mars), believes that she has "a gift" for magic—not just for ordinary legerdemain but for the *real* magic that, as he puts it, "comes from the heart." Myra has other ideas: she's engaged to a rich playboy, Wyatt (D. W. Moffett), who needs a wife to ornament his campaign for a Senate seat, and she plans to exchange the rigors of theatrical life for the luxurious, pampered existence of a lady of leisure. Wyatt, though natty and apparently genial, is a jackass (his fussy little mustache gives him away), and Myra, like countless screwball-comedy heroines before her, has obviously made a terrible, self-delusive choice, for which the only remedy will be to fall in love with a less reputable—but more sincere—man. Soon after that "Alice in Wonderland" opening, the movie contrives to set her on the run from Wyatt; she heads across the border into Mexico, and there she meets the man of her (unacknowledged) dreams, in the form of a mysterious chain-smoking drifter named Alex Ross (Russell Crowe).

And at this point "Rough Magic" plunges, head first and heedless, down the rabbit hole and into the perilous territory of pure fairy tale, where prudent filmmakers fear to tread. Myra and Alex hook up with an elixir-peddling quack, Doc Ansell (Jim Broadbent), who enlists them in his search for the recipe of a potent concoction that is the favored beverage of a secretive, mystically inclined tribe of Indians. Myra, in one of the story's few predictable turns, winds up ingesting this potion and thereby gets in touch, at last, with her long-suppressed inner magician: with a word and an angry glance, she can transform a bulky man into a small, sad-looking sausage; when she and Alex are in the throes of passion, they levitate together. The movie's comic-fantastic tone runs the constant risk of becoming merely precious, but Peploe manages to keep "Rough Magic" feeling airy, light, and bizarrely natural, perhaps because she never lets it rise too far above the moviegoer's familiar ground. The screenplay, by Peploe and William Brookfield, is adapted from a 1944 pulp novel by James Hadley Chase, and the film doesn't try to disguise its low origins; it even revels in them. The picture has a kind of playful, bounding quality, hopscotching among the conventions of various genres—film noir, romantic comedy, road movie, fable—apparently just for the joy of a purposeless zigzag motion. The actors—especially Fonda, who is luminously funny—are more than nimble enough for this game. The film has its awkward moments, but Peploe, like a good magician, covers her occasional fumbles with speed and sleight of hand. "Rough Magic" is a blithe-spirited diversion, and in the end the director pulls off the spectacular trick of making its disparate elements seem to merge in a coherent comic vision. The whole picture turns out to be based on the equation of love and magic and the flickering illusionism of moviemaking, all three producing enchantment by means of one simple principle: Now you see it, now you don't. ◆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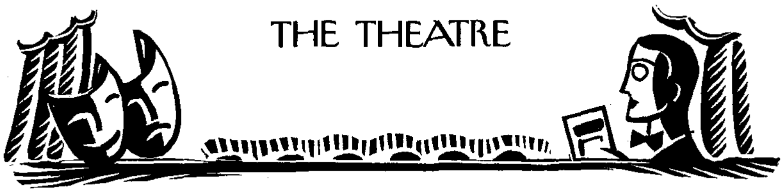
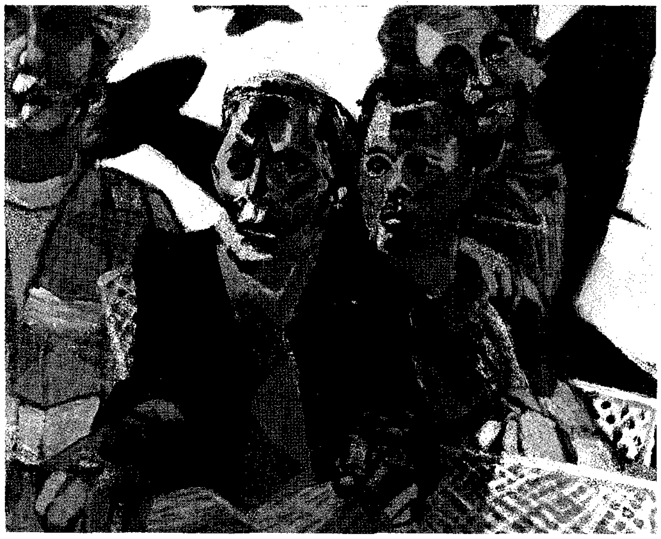


THE COST OF SUCCESS

An Arthur Miller classic, and the thought-provoking "Collected Stories."

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

ARTHUR MILLER'S 1947 play "All My Sons" doesn't hold the same place in our culture as "Death of a Salesman," which it preceded by two years. And, unlike "Death of a Salesman," it has no famous lines—no handy thematic catchphrases—that have echoed down the years. But it has just as much power, if not more. In "Salesman," as Miller blows out the candle on the American dream and elegizes the tired, desperate Willy Loman, there's a faint aroma of condescension in the air. We can feel sorry, deeply sorry, that he has failed, but it's a sorrow we can live with—we can even embrace it, because it doesn't threaten us in any way. Innumerable people have said that they know someone like Willy Loman, but it's a good bet that no one—not even a travelling salesman—has ever recognized himself in the character. "All My Sons," now at the Roundabout in a strong production directed by Barry Edelstein, won't let you remove yourself to a safe distance; it begins in the almost too bright light of an August morning, and it's a light from which there is no hiding.



Linda Stephens, John Cullum, Michael Hayden, and Angie Phillips in "All My Sons."

"All My Sons" is set in the back yard of Joe and Kate Keller (John Cullum and Linda Stephens), in an unnamed Midwestern town. It is exactly one year after the end of the war, which did not leave the family unmarked: the Kellers' older son, Larry, who was a pilot, has been missing and presumed dead for three years; Chris (Michael Hayden), their other son, lost almost all the men in the company he commanded, and since his return he can't seem to find meaning in working for a living. And the family left its mark on the war as well: Joe and his business partner were tried for knowingly selling cracked engine heads to the military, causing the deaths of twenty-one pilots. Joe was eventually exonerated; his partner is still in prison. Kate cannot accept the probability that Larry is dead, but Joe is back in business, and the family has managed to achieve an uneasy equilibrium.

What this play forces you to think about is not the price of failure in America but the cost of success—and the definition of success. "All My Sons" isn't, of course, a love letter to American capitalism, but neither is it a tract. It's free of noxiously sentimental constructs like

RICCARDO VECCHIO

"the common man"—what it has is real people who have done real things and have had to find a way to live with the consequences. Cullum and Stephens, as Joe and Kate, come across as good, nice people—not perfect people, but decent parents and solid citizens. Joe is a gruffly warm, generous man, and Kate's fragility and her wish to hold on to her son make her seem almost noble. They believe in who they are, and you do, too. When their deceptions are revealed, you're doubly shocked—shocked at the news, and shocked to find yourself grieving over the loss of the illusions about family life that they've tried to perpetuate.

There are other characters in "All My Sons" who are just as important as Joe and Kate, and when the family erupts they, too, are buried in volcanic ash. Michael Hayden, as Chris, is able to show such convincing rage when his idealism is destroyed that we are both terrified of him and terrified for him. His girlfriend, Ann—who is also the daughter of Joe's convicted partner—is hard to read, and Angie Phillips gives a disciplined performance in this ambiguous role. One of the production's most memorable qualities is Donald Holder's lighting: as the day gives way to twilight and then to darkness, the changing light provides a moving accompaniment to this family's long day's journey into night.

DONALD MARGULIES'S new play, "Collected Stories," at the Manhattan Theatre Club, is in some ways a textbook case of protégée seeks mentor, protégée gets mentor, and protégée loses mentor. There are six scenes, set over a period of six years, beginning on the afternoon when a young graduate student, Lisa Morrison (Debra Messing), goes to the Greenwich Village apartment of her professor, a distinguished short-story writer named Ruth Steiner (Maria Tucci), to discuss a story she's written for class. Steiner is arch and magnetically forbidding—a sort of cross between Professor Kingsfield and Margo Channing—and her apartment, a creation of the set designer Thomas Lynch, has an appealingly bookish, stuck-in-the-fifties look, complete with unwashed windows. Lisa is in awe of Steiner; she knows her work backward and forward, and wants to become her assistant. It's a classic scenario, and from the start we can see trouble coming: in literature, the assistant, like the babysitter in horror movies, must kill or be killed.

"Collected Stories" was inspired by a brouhaha a few years ago in the book-publishing world: Stephen Spender accused David Leavitt of appropriating material from his 1951 memoir, "World Within World," and using it in his novel "While England Sleeps"—accused him, essentially, of stealing his life story. In the end, Leavitt had to remove the passages in question, and the episode, in turn, became the subject of his *next* novel. Whose life is it, anyway? That's a question that all writers have to struggle with when they've hooked what feels like a big one: Should they release it or should they gut it and grill it and serve it up to the world? Does the fish have any say in the matter? In "Collected Stories," friendship, too, enters into the equation, and the play is at its dramatic best in showing how the relationship between the two women both deepens and sours over the years. Tucci, under the intelligent direction of Lisa Peterson, takes a character who, with her imperiousness and wit, could easily seem merely brittle and makes her humanly breakable and vulnerable. And enviable: even her hair, a loosely pulled back salt-and-pepper mane, seems like a literary accomplishment. Ruth knows herself fairly well, too. When she returns from a trip to Washington, where she spoke to Congress about funding for the arts, she says to Lisa, "I was just playing a part: the feisty older woman who cracks wise and gets away with saying just about anything. If she were alive today, Thelma Ritter would play me in the movies." But where Ruth's self-knowledge falls short our sympathy begins. That's not so with Lisa, who serves the same function here that Goofus does in *Highlights*—to show us the wrong way to do it. But Messing is fun to watch as she changes from a bubbly, awed young person into a sleek literary woman of the world. When Lisa writes a book that fictionalizes the highlight of Ruth's young life—a relationship with Delmore Schwartz—Ruth is devastated. Lisa, in turn, is utterly baffled by her mentor's inability to realize that she was "honoring" her; after all, it was Ruth who said, "You can't censor your creative impulses because of the danger of hurting someone's feelings."

Margulies has waded into muddy waters by taking on the subject of literary betrayal. He's smart enough to know that he can't clear them; as long as there are writers, there will always be plenty of decomposing bodies on the bottom. The main trouble with "Collected Stories" is that for the audience there are no surprises, nasty or nice; Margulies planted huge signposts in his play, indicating every upcoming turn in the story long before we get there. When the betrayal comes, we're braced for it. Only a few minutes after Lisa enters Ruth's apartment for the first time, we've figured out that there's only one thing to do when a writer comes to your door: don't answer. ♦

A NOTE TO POTENTIAL SOLVERS

On the page opposite is the inaugural installment of *The New Yorker's* 8x10 Cryptic, a new weekly feature. Cryptic crosswords take a bit of getting used to, but, once tasted, they tend to be delightfully habit-forming. Here's how they work.

Like a spy's coded telegram, a cryptic clue hides its real message. To solve a clue, you must deconstruct it, breaking it into two parts. At one end is a direct definition; at the other, a bit of wordplay. Once you hit upon the answer, it fits the clue like a key in a lock, and every part of the clue is accounted for.

For example: *Bodybuilder so tired after changing (7)*. The phrase "after changing" here is a cryptic indication to rearrange the adjacent letters "so tired" to get the seven-letter answer STEROID, which is defined directly as "bodybuilder." Any word or phrase in a clue (like "scattered," "weird," or "in a bad way") that suggests mixed-upness may signal an anagram.

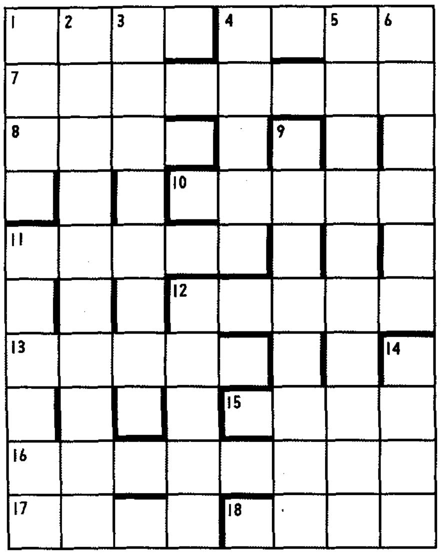
Or this: *Error concealed by city police (4)*. This is a hidden-word clue. The word "error" defines the answer, TYPO, which is literally "concealed" in "ciTY POlice."

Sometimes the cryptic end of the clue breaks the answer word into successive parts, as in: *Cut the end of class one Wednesday (5)*. "The end of class" is S, "one" is the article A, and a common abbreviation for Wednesday is WED. Put the parts together and you get SAWED ("cut").

Other types of cryptic wordplay include reversals (*About from behind* for TUBA, for example), homophones (*Rain, I hear*, or, more diabolically, *Drizzle, they say*, for REIGN), deletions ("aspiring" to ASPIRIN), containers ("tuna" inside "forte" to get FORTUNATE), and double definitions (*Metal guide* for LEAD).

Be assured: it does get easier. But it never stops being challenging.

THE NEW YORKER'S
8 x 10 CRYPTIC NO. 1



ACROSS

1 Clever bow (4)
4 Reportedly lost in fog (4)
7 Kind of wheel allowed in highway (8)
8 A bit of elbow room in Paradise (4)
10 Gertrude's mug (5)
11 Rock star of no importance (5)
12 Breaks first ground (5)
13 $100 in new deli for a hero (2,3)
15 Almost make muffin material (4)
16 Most intimate hint about Nabokov's origin (8)
17 More than one big head goes rolling (4)
18 Peg capturing Harry's heart in "A Place to Hang Your Hat" (4)

DOWN

1 Olympian in hardware store (4)
2 TV-show host shot "Long Riders" (3,7)
3 Hint: stay with pool equipment (3,5)
4 My carrying scarf down is thought-provoking (5)
5 Drunken pirates set for a racy dance (10)
6 Wrong volleyball gear brought up for court game (6)
9 Sailor at a distance embraced by prophet (8)
11 Delight in début of performance: "Rent" (6)
12 Calls for a gymnastic event (5)
14 A stake in "Volcano" making a comeback (4)

• •

This week's puzzle is by Monika Zook. Its solution will appear in the next issue. An explanation of all the tricks of cryptic clue-solving appears in "The New Yorker's Guide to Solving Cryptic Crosswords." For a free copy, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope or your fax number to "Solver's Guide," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036.

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

AS YOU GO FORWARD

BY CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

MEMBERS of the graduating class: On my way in from the airport, as I was composing my thoughts for my talk to you, a phrase kept coming back to me. I believe it was a great American, La Rochefoucauld, who first said, "*Où est la plume de ma tante*?" These immortal words—or, as the first Americans would say, *mots*—seem to me to sum up the very spirit of your generation.

When La Rochefoucauld said that, during the cold winter at Valley Forge when vastly outnumbered Americans assisted only by Guatemalan mercenaries faced the overwhelming forces of Genghis Khan, knowing where your aunt's pen was could mean the difference between having something to write with and trying to make yourself understood to an impatient Mongol warrior by scratching "I surrender" in the dirt with a stick. We lost a lot of plumes at Valley Forge, and even more aunts, but then, as Herodotus says, "history is worth a few dead aunts."

Your future, however, is much brighter than it was for the aunts of Valley Forge. As I look out on your faces, a veritable pointillist pageant of diversity, I am reminded of what Descartes, the father of contract bridge, once said, namely, "If you want to get to know someone really well, you must first smell his moccasins after he has walked a mile in them."

Descartes was, of course, speaking metaphorically. And yet, in a larger sense, he was echoing the sentiments of Lao-tse, breeder of the malaria-carrying African dipterous insect that bears his name twice, who so memorably said, "If you want to get to Hang-chou before Fang Li, feed gravel to his ox."

I vividly remember the speaker at my own graduation, so many years ago now. He or she said to us, "You stand on the shoulders of people who came before you, so don't jiggle." Wise words, truly. And isn't that what education is all about?

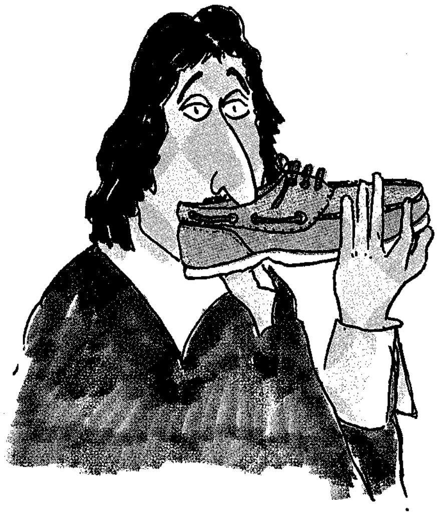
Great changes have taken place during your short lifetimes. You no longer have to hunt woolly mastodons with rocks and spears if you want a late-night snack. If you want something to eat, you simply say, "Hey, waiter." If it's money you want, you no longer have to stick a gun in the teller's face and say, "Give me all your money." You just hack into their mainframes. Things really aren't so bad, when you come right down to it.

It has been said that those to whom much has been given will want even more. Someday, not in my lifetime, perhaps, but maybe in yours, human beings will be able to eat all they want without putting on weight. Someday they may be able to avoid jury duty by simply sending in a postcard saying "No way!" Someday, computers may not only be able to beat human beings at chess, but also at tennis and ice hockey and volleyball. Someday, computers may be able to marry Brooke Shields.

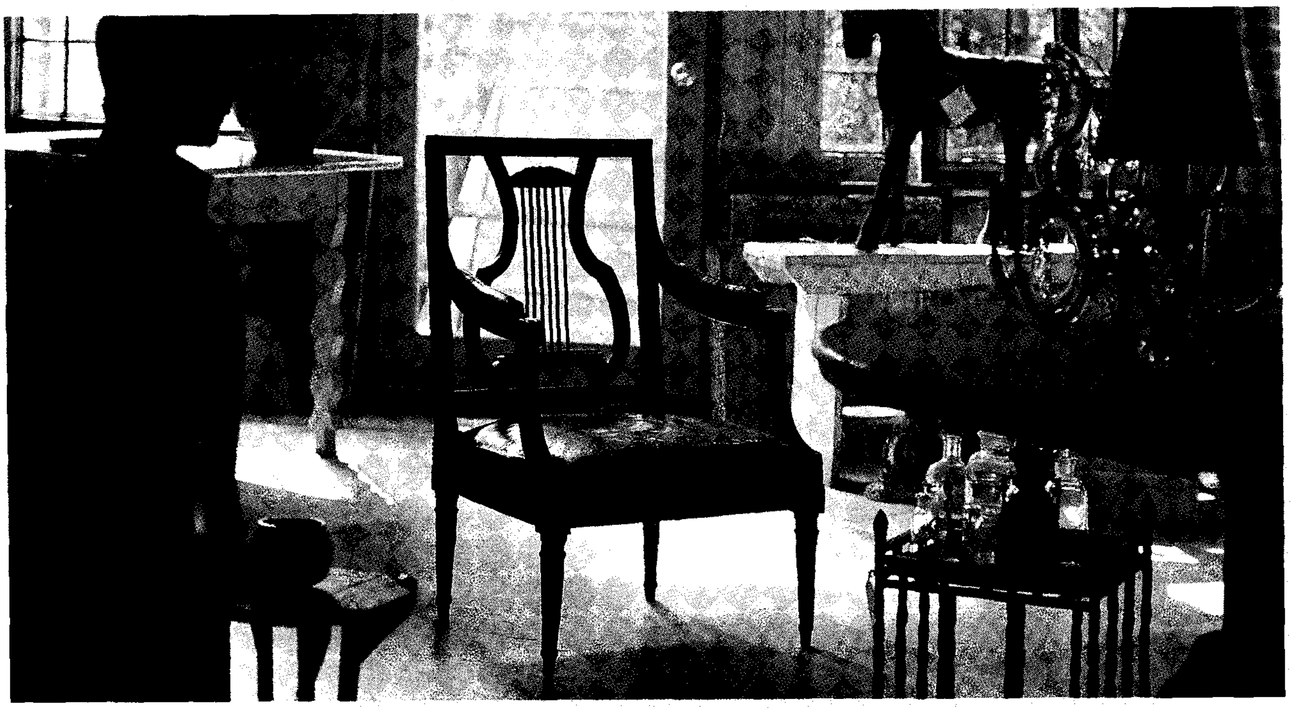
Whether all this comes to pass is now up to you. It is your turn now. My generation is tired. Soon we will take the money you are paying into Social Security and move to gated communities in places where it does not snow and we can start drinking before five o'clock. Or even earlier. In fact, I've already started, not that you would notice.

Yours will be an era of great change. But, as George Harrison put it with the piquancy that is uniquely his, "You know it don't come easy." You will spend hours stuck in traffic listening to cabdrivers explain their proposals for peace in the Middle East. Your flights will be delayed—or, yes, even cancelled. Your frequent-flier miles will expire, and the bean burrito, hot as molten lava on the outside, will still be frozen on the inside. You will be tested, perhaps as no generation before has ever been tested. At such times, try to remember—to paraphrase the words of another Beatles song, "Hey Dude"—that it is a fool who takes his world and tries to make it cooler by inhaling freon.

In one of the last letters he ever wrote to Dorothy Parker, inventor of the fountain pen that bears her name, the prince formerly known as Niccolò Machiavelli declared, "If all the *papardelle* in the world were laid end to end, I wouldn't be a bit surprised." It may be daunting to you to imagine twenty-five thousand miles of bow-shaped pasta girdling the globe, but let me today say to you, on behalf of my generation, "You can do it!" We certainly hope you can, anyway. It cost a lot of money to educate you people, you know. ♦



MICHAEL CRAWFORD

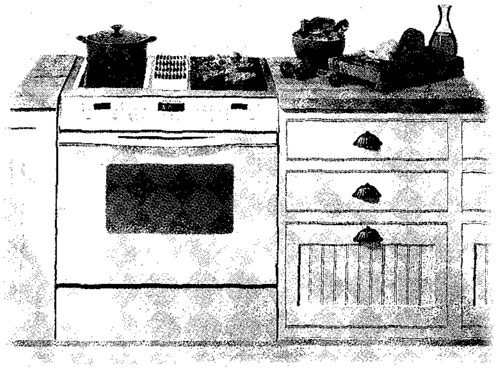


IT TOOK A MONTH OF SATURDAYS TO FIND THE PERFECT CHAIR. BUT ONLY ONE TO FIND THE PERFECT KITCHEN.

She enjoyed the hunt as much as anything else. But when she saw that chair, peeking out from under a pile of red velvet curtains, she knew it was over.

As for her husband, he'd already done his part: hooked them up with a new range and refrigerator. Wasn't his fault it only took one day. But since Jenn-Air's known for making top quality appliances, there really wasn't much point looking anyplace else. Even she could see that.

Next Saturday, she'd begin her search for the perfect armoire. But thanks to some quick if not inspired thinking on his part, they had their perfect kitchen today.



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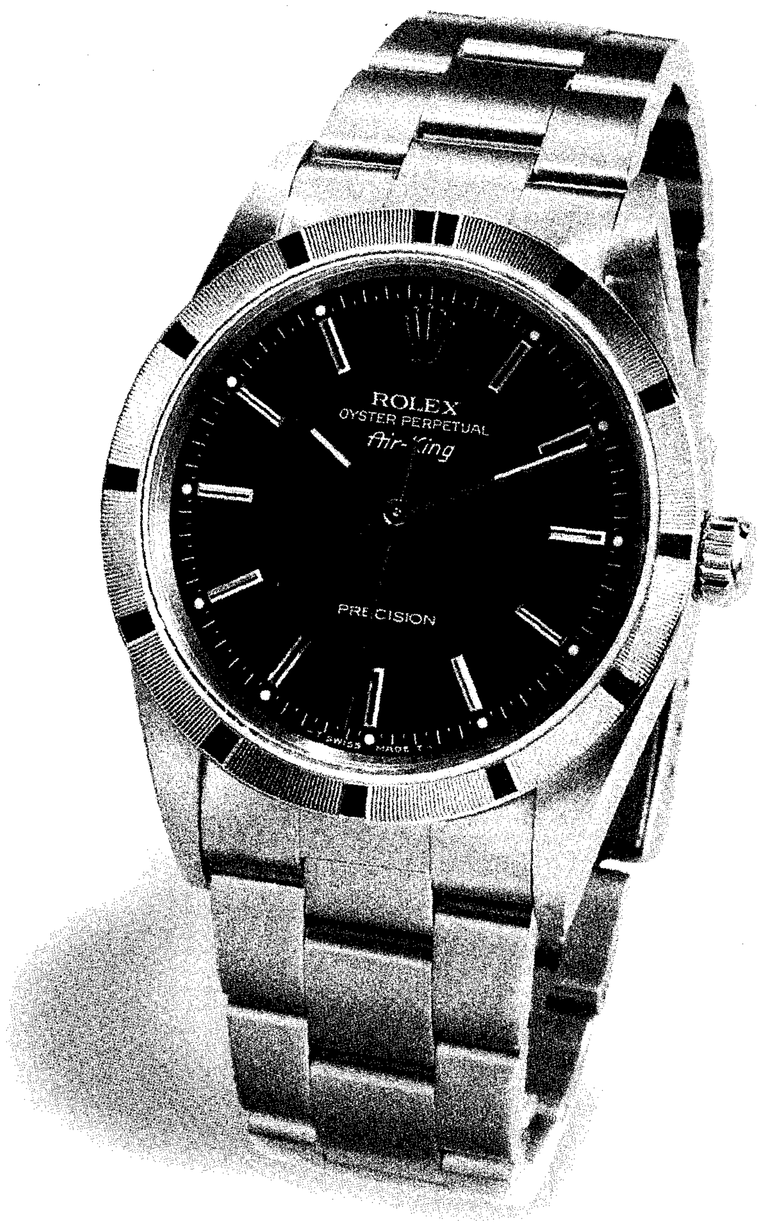

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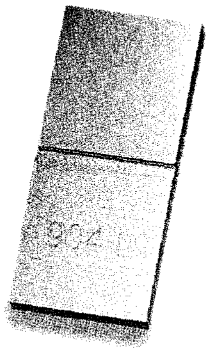

Impurities in steel can not only compromise its toughness and durability but can mar the effects of polishing by leaving little telltale traces called "comet trails."

To eliminate this, the Oyster case of this $2,250 Air-King is made of steel classified as "904 L," the finest quality used in watchmaking and, perhaps, now that we think of it, why so many people take a shine to it.

Rolex Oyster Perpetual Air-King in stainless steel with matching Oyster bracelet. For the name and location of an Official Rolex Jeweler near you, please call 1-800-36ROLEX. Rolex, ♛, Oyster Perpetual, Oyster and Air-King are trademarks.

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